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The Temple and the Tabernacle of God

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Published as an E-book

by

Austin-Sparks.Net

Email: info@austin-sparks.net

ISBN: 978-1-927223-01-7

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Contents

Chapter 1
Chapter 2 - Humility
Chapter 3 - Power in Witness
Chapter 4

Chapter 1

"And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnifical, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death." 1 Chron. 22:5.

"And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel." Ezek. 40:4.

"Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing? The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts." Haggai 2:3,9.

"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body." John 2:19-21.

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Eph. 2:21-22.

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Cor. 3:16-17.

"And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened... And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Rev. 15:5, 21:3. "And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning

of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." Rev. 3:14-22.

There seems to be a very forceful significance about the way in which the Lord introduces Himself to the church at Laodicea. You notice the state of things represent a state of spiritual blindness, which means that the truth is not seen, especially the truth as to their own state, a state of self-satisfaction, self-fulness, self-confidence, self-sufficiency, self-glory. As the Lord sees them He sees a lie and a deception, just exactly the opposite of the way in which they see themselves. They think they are rich, He sees that they are poor; they think they have glory, He sees them as being rejected; they think they know, He sees that they are in blind ignorance. The whole thing is, though they do not recognise it, a falsehood from every standpoint and the opposite of what the Lord would have and requires. There was an utter falling short of the divine mind.

To a state like that the Lord presents Himself as the Amen: “These things saith the Amen...” (Rev. 3:14). We understand that word to mean the Verily, the Truly. It is a word which was frequently on His lips in the days of His flesh. Whenever He was going to present something of particular and peculiar meaning and value, and importance; something that could not be set aside; something that must be taken account of; something that would govern, determine and fix destiny, He prefaced the statement with: “Verily, verily, I say unto you”. It is the same word as is used here—“Verily”, “Amen”, “most truly”. I think one version puts it “Of most certain truth I say unto you...”. “These things saith the Amen.”—that is final, that is settled, that is something you cannot get past; it is presented to you as God’s last word.

Here then is what God presents in Christ. The Amen becomes personal. It is not a word now, not a saying, not an utterance, but a person. “These things saith the Amen.” It is the designation of the Person, the One Who in Himself is God’s final standard, the Verity, the faithful and true Witness. Christ comes before this church and, in effect, He says, I am the standard, there is nothing after Me, I have the final word, I represent the uttermost thought of God: you have to stand and measure yourself by Me. So you see the lie in the presence of the truth, the deception in the presence of the “verily”, all that is falling short of God’s thought in the presence of the full revelation of that thought in Christ. The way in which He introduces Himself to the Laodicean church is most significant. So the false is measured by the true. The one side of the balance is the Amen and the other side their state, with which they are so satisfied, which they think to be so perfect, so glorious. Over against the Amen, they go up in the balances and there is an exposure which calls for repentance, rectification and adjustment.

That forms the background of our consideration and of our spiritual exercise and ministry for all the Lord’s people at this time. It is seeing God’s truth as revealed in the person of His Son, as over against things as they are, which men may think to be all right while they are utterly contrary to that presentation. Ezekiel the prophet, in a day when the temple in Jerusalem was in ruins, was shown a spiritual temple measured out by a man with a golden measuring reed. We know how exact were all the measurements, how thorough was the work of measuring and presentation to the prophet; how the prophet was led in, led through, led round, led out, led up, set down, all under the government of this angel with the measuring reed. He was shown the outside, he was shown the inside, he was shown from above. From every angle, every aspect, every detail, this spiritual temple which was God’s mind exactly expressed, a temple which has never yet been on this earth in a literal form and expression, was shown to him. For Ezekiel it was a spiritual thing, and it remains that until now. Then the comment to Ezekiel was, “Son of man show the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed...” (Ezek. 43:10). There is one temple on earth, another temple of spiritual revelation; one that has failed to answer to God’s thought, the other that is the expression of God’s thought; the other brought into view in the day when the one is destroyed.

That is not only prophecy but it is also a figure. Adam was the former temple, and the first Adam is in ruins as regards what God intended he should be, His temple—made, formed for His dwelling. In the day when the first Adam is in ruins, the last Adam is brought into view as God’s perfect temple in Whom He

will dwell for ever, and where there will be no ruin. It is the temple and the tabernacle of God that is before us as the mind of God expressed in Christ.

Israel stands as a type for all ages and dispensations from the beginning onward, touching the whole thought of God. We have referred to Adam. Well, Israel sets forth in type what God's thought was concerning Adam. The central and supreme thing in Israel's life was the temple, and that had a backward aspect as well as a forward aspect, it looked right back to God's intention at the beginning in the creation of man, and looks right on to God's end when that intention is fully realised in Christ and His body, the church. When Adam was made it was the result of these counsels of the Godhead: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). All that that means we do not know, and we dare not speculate upon it, but this we can most certainly conclude that if God determines to make something in His Own image, after His Own likeness, it will be exceeding magnificent, it will be the expression of His thoughts which are always surpassing thoughts.

Even in this poor, marred, death-stricken creation we are able to discern and detect and trace the marks of God's mind. We look upon the beauties—as they still remain in large measure—in this earth and there we see expressed or reflected the thought of God and we wonder, we marvel. We sit down before a simple flower and marvel. When God does something for Himself it bears the marks of what He is. David was right when he said: "...the house that is to be built for the Lord must be exceeding magnifical..." (1 Chron. 22:5). "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...". What was it for? It was to be a house of God, that God might dwell with men and be in them. He made man for that purpose, for His Own glory. Trace the various and numerous references to a house of God, a dwelling place of God, and you will always find that, sooner or later, you come upon the revelation of the glory of God in connection therewith. The house will, sooner or later, be filled with His glory. That is the great climax of this purpose.

Israel's temple is but a type of Adam in intention, to be indwelt by God and filled with God's glory; that in him and through him the glory of God should be displayed. If we have any doubt about it in the backward look, surely all those doubts are dispelled immediately we take the forward look. We take a look at the one Man as we see Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and we see Him crowned with glory and honour. Then we are told that He is but the first, and that He is bringing many sons to glory, and that we are to be joined with Him, as

members of His body with the same glory. There is no doubt whatever that Adam was created for this very purpose, and man is in existence to be God's temple. The temple, then, is a type of man according to God's purpose in a backward look.

The temple of Israel came to ruins. Why? We know one thing, and one thing only, which was responsible for it all. The Lord had always, from the time that He had chosen Israel, laid down with tremendous emphasis the law that there was to be no fellowship with the nations round about, because of the spiritual alliances of those nations with evil forces. It was not just a matter of being unfriendly, of being exclusive, having nothing to do with people. The Lord saw deeper than that. His dealings with the Egyptians were only a secondary thing. The primary thing was against all the gods of the Egyptians. So in Canaan it was the relationship of the nations with satanic forces which made it necessary for them to be blotted out. So the Lord's people had to be kept clear and clean of all such fellowship and alliance because of the spiritual kingdom.

When Israel entered into relationships with the nations round about on a friendly basis, the glory of the Lord departed from the house of the Lord, the temple lost its glory and remained a mere shell for a time, while prophets pleaded, entreated, warned, and we get the long and terrible story of Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel and others, calling back to a break with these nations, a purging, a cleansing. That is why, when a remnant returned, Ezra and Nehemiah laboured so ardently to get out the mixture from the people in their merged relationships, because the principle was still there that any kind of spiritual alliance was spiritual fornication and God could have nothing to do with it. Israel's persistence in complicity with those nations led to the ruin of their temple.

It is again a type with its backward aspect, God creating for His temple, He being in touch, in fellowship, and communion. Then there came complicity with Satan, resulting in the ruin of the temple, the ruin of that race and that man, personally and corporately.

Now you must remember that there is a sinister purpose behind all this. If God created man with the purpose of indwelling him (I am not saying that when Adam was created God indwelt him in the full sense as He indwells the believer now, as He indwelt Christ, but that was the object in view), the impressive thing is that through the ages the one dominating ambition of Satan has been to indwell men. It would be speculating to get back beyond the record of the Word

of God. Some have done that and spoken about Satan losing his body, being cast out of his body, and becoming a disembodied spirit with one eternal longing to inhabit a body. That is deduction from certain things in the Word of God that demons are always seeking to possess bodies. There is no doubt about it that demon possession is a dominating objective of the forces of Satan, to get possession of a body. When the demons pleaded as they were being cast from the man that they should not be cast into mere air, but be allowed to enter into the bodies of the swine, it seems clear that a disembodied state for them evidently represented something full of terror, and Satan has as his main objective the entering in and possessing of a temple. He will enter in at last into the Antichrist.

You see there can be no such thing as a vacuum. If God is not in, Satan will be in sooner or later. You will remember the illustration given by the Lord Jesus of this matter, about the house from which the demon had been cast out, he wandered in solitary places and found no rest. He returned and found that the house was still empty, and he took seven other demons worse than himself and entered in. The disaster came because the house was not occupied already.

All this bears upon the point that Satan is represented as clamouring to possess, to enter in, to have a temple, a habitation. It is the counter of God. God made man in order to inhabit him. Satan is seeking to get God's place in man. Complicity with Satan proved to be the ruin of man, the ruin of the temple, just as is illustrated in the Word in the case of Israel and their temple. Complicity with Satan behind the nations meant ruin of their temple.

What were the results? The results were that in the case of the temple of Israel God withdrew. The temple was overthrown, the enemy of Israel came into the place of power, and Israel and the vessels of the temple were possessed by the enemy and used for his glory and pleasure. It is all very clearly typical and illustrative. First of all when Adam brought about the ruin, God withdrew. Then the temple lay waste, broken. Then the enemy assumed the place of power over the temple and the man and all that which in man had been to the glory and service and pleasure of God was taken, and has ever since been used to the satisfaction of Satan. That is how we find man.

What was the governing law of all this, illustrated in Israel, actual in the case of man? The governing law was *heart* fellowship with God by faith.

If you get hold of that one thing you have hold of a key that opens almost everything, if not everything with which we have to do. It is HEART fellowship by faith. In Adam it was a question of his heart relationship with God, his heart fellowship with God by faith. Everything hung upon that, and everything still hangs upon that. We shall see what that means. We just mention it here and pass on for a moment, and then return to it presently.

Next we come to certain prophetic hints. The temple is in ruins, God withdrawn. But it is not left there. As we saw at the outset, when Israel's temple was in ruins Ezekiel was shown a spiritual temple, perfect to a detail. It is a hint, and it is something more than a hint. In the day when the temple was broken down the word of the Lord by Haggai was: "Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? ...is it not in your eyes as nothing? ...The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former...". It is a prophetic hint. That house has never yet been in greater glory than Solomon's, and whether there has to be a literal temple of this earth with glory greater than that of Solomon's temple will not concern us very much, we have looked higher and we have seen the veil drawn away and the temple or tabernacle in heaven appearing and then coming down from heaven—"The tabernacle of God is with men." Solomon's temple is not going to drop out of heaven, or anything like that. It is a spiritual temple that comes out of heaven. The latter state is greater than the former. There are many of these prophetic hints.

In connection with what do they hint? Christ! They look on to Christ. Only Christ can transcend all that has been, and He does, because He fulfils all types. The last Adam is greater than the first, the last temple is greater than the former. All prophecy leads on to Him. So Christ comes into view when the temple is in ruins. Christ is presented as God's eternal reality, not a type, nor a pattern, but a reality, of which these others were but patterns and types. He is seen as God's temple: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up... But he spake of the temple of his body." Adam, we are told, was a type "of him that was to come", and if Adam was to be God's temple it was only in type. The types have broken down. Christ is the reality; He is God's temple. God dwelt in Him, and dwells in Him Who is the Verily of God, the Amen, the last Adam, the positive, the final, the conclusive.

Then, when you see Christ brought in as God's eternal reality in the matter of God's dwelling place, God's temple, God's habitation, you have to remember that as that temple is revealed here on earth it was governed by a number of

laws. His life was governed by various spiritual laws. There are the laws of the House of God, the laws of the temple, and Christ being as God's dwelling place was governed by these spiritual laws. It is those spiritual laws that we have to consider presently, but what we want to do at the moment is to see that Christ on earth sets forth what God's temple is, and if we are going to be living stones, built into that temple, if we are to be built together, a habitation of God, what is true of Christ has got to be true of us as to the laws which govern the house of God. To put it in another way with Paul, there must be a conforming of us to the image of God's Son, so that we, with Him, form one temple, one house of God, one habitation of God through the Spirit.

That brings us to one of these laws. We look back again to trace the inception of ruin. Where and how did ruin begin? It began before ever it touched this creation, it began before ever it came to Adam. We are allowed to look through and see what the inception of ruin was, and we gather from what the Word of God says that it was pride of heart: "For thou hast said in thine heart... I will exalt my throne above the stars... I will be like the Most High." It was pride of heart which was the inception of ruin, in the case of Satan, and in the case of the first Adam the first personal and representative habitation of God. We need not trace it through again. We are familiar with the story. Whatever we have to say about Adam's reaction to Satan's temptation, it all resolves itself into a matter of pride of heart. What is pride? Or, to put the question in another way, How did that pride of heart express itself? What were its features? The features are exactly similar with Satan and Adam. When once pride of heart is there you have the same results: firstly, independence; secondly, possession; thirdly, self-centredness in the fullest sense; (that is, having things in oneself, no longer in another, no longer outside of oneself: I can! I know! I will! I have!); fourthly, self-exaltation "I will be"). There you have pride analysed at its very root: independence—no longer a dependent being; possession—possessiveness, taking hold, getting it into our own hands; self-centredness and self-exaltation. That is pride of heart. It is the explanation of ruin.

What were the immediate results? First, death. Satan became the very seat and centre of death and "death passed upon all men", by complicity with him. We need not analyse death but merely state the fact. Secondly, darkness. What is spiritual darkness? Well, we have referred to Laodicea—blind, but not knowing it. That is deception, to be blind and not know it, and then to believe, to be convinced that you see, that you know. A deceived heart led him astray. How great that blindness is is seen by the universal repudiation of it. The most

difficult thing is to get the natural man to believe that he is blind. Try any educated person today, try the modernist, try the scholar, try the religionist who is not born again, and your work will be of the hardest, if not the most hopeless to convince them that they do not know, that they never can know until they are born again. It is the most heartbreaking thing to try to get people to see. They think they do see, they cannot agree that they do not see. They simply get over the difficulty by saying: Oh, well, that is your interpretation of things, it is not my interpretation, it does not mean that I know less than you do. The very fact that blindness is repudiated by the natural man is the proof of its depth, of its strength, of its power. Its universal deception makes it necessary for a miracle to be wrought in order that they shall see. God's attitude and Christ's attitude to those of this world is that they have no eyes, they are born blind. Thirdly, bondage. Here again it will not be admitted, but there is bondage to the Devil. The fact of the bondage is manifested by a refusal to entertain any such suggestion, and therefore by refusing to take any course which would prove it. You and I have discovered how great that bondage is by seeking to escape it. We know because we have sought to escape. You never know how great the bondage is until you try to get out of it. The men of Israel did not know how great their bondage in Egypt was until they contemplated escape, and then they discovered that bondage was a greater thing than they ever imagined, and they would never have believed the tenacious grip it held. We should never have believed it until the prospect and promise of liberation came to us.

Then self-responsibility was the result; that is having to take responsibility for making your own way. After the ruin man had to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. He had to make his own way, to take responsibility to live, and it was a terrific thing. Up to that point God had taken responsibility, provided everything. Life was a very simple thing. There was no anxious thought about wherewithal of any kind. But immediately afterwards he had to take responsibility for his own existence on the earth, and work by the sweat of his brow to keep body and soul together. These are the consequences of pride of heart, leading to ruin.

Of course at that point Christ comes in, the last Adam, with redemption and recovery. How? If pride of heart was the explanation of ruin, humility of heart is basic to revelation and recovery. This is a law of the house of God in which He will dwell. "I am meek and lowly in heart."

I would like to introduce here a whole set of Scriptures. If pride of heart is independence then humility of heart is dependence, and when Christ is

introduced as representing God's temple, God's dwelling place, then a law of God's house, if it is to be built and maintained and not come to ruin, is the law of humility, and that is seen in the case of Christ from His birth. Everything about His birth speaks of meekness, lowliness, humility. His home and upbringing, His entering upon His ministry, His daily life, His manner, speak of humility. There is nothing self-important here, no pride of heart: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is... lowly, and riding upon an ass...." That is how He came. What a life of utter dependence upon the Father He lived.

If ruin came by pride, and pride showed itself in possession, or possessiveness, then humility will be self-emptying, and self-emptiness. If pride of heart showed itself in self-centredness then humility is God-centredness. This is Christ, the house of God. If the issues of pride of heart were death, then humility is life. If pride of heart worked out in darkness then humility is light. Do you want to know? "The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad." Meekness is essential to spiritual knowledge. If pride of heart led to bondage, then humility is liberty. If pride of heart meant that God refused to take responsibility for that man, and left him to take responsibility for himself, humility means that God assumes the responsibility again to look after those who humbly trust Him.

We will come back to this later but we have gone thus far in order to indicate what the Lord is trying to get us to see. God's temple, God's dwelling place governs history from the eternal counsels of God. Christ sets forth what that is, and in Him we see the laws which govern the habitation of God, and these laws are the opposite of those which obtained and governed in the leading to the ruin of the house of God. The first law is meekness, humility and all that that means.

There is a power about this divine humility which is capable of bringing the pride of Satan to the dust and destroying all the works of the Devil. "He was crucified through weakness." But what that crucifixion wrought in the universe! "He humbled himself." But to what effect! Satan has surely to rue the day that he participated in the humiliation of the Son of God. There is something mighty about humility and something terrible about pride.

Chapter 2 - Humility

"Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ, who in presence am base among you, but being absent am bold toward you" 2 Cor. 10:1.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Gal. 5:22-23.

"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love" Eph. 4:2.

"Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls ... Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth ... Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass." Matt. 11:29, 5:5, 21:5.

That which we have been considering, and with which we are to be occupied for a little while longer is this House of God, which is perfectly represented by the Lord Jesus while here on the earth. The house of God is governed by certain laws, and if we are coming into that relationship with Christ which the Word speaks of, resulting in our being builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit, and being a temple of God, living stones built up a spiritual house, then we also have got to be governed by the same laws as governed the life of the Lord Jesus, the same principles have got to hold good in our case if God is going to find in us His dwelling place. These laws are the opposite of those features of ruin, of which we have already spoken. If pride was the root of the ruin, then humility will be basic to recovery and to the house of God, and if pride is seen in independence, then humility will be seen in dependence.

Let us stay with that for a moment. We have seen that in the case of the Lord Jesus He chose of His own free will to live here on this earth a life of dependence upon the Father, making it perfectly clear that the Son can do nothing out from Himself, but He does whatsoever He sees the Father doing. He

does not speak or work out from Himself, but His life is a life of voluntary dependence upon the Father all the way through. That was a mark of His true humility, and that made it possible for the Father to dwell in Him in this particular sense, that He was setting forth for man what a dwelling place of God really is. It is that in which there is no pride expressing itself in independence, but perfect humility on the basis of dependence.

It seems to be clear enough in the case of the Lord Jesus to make it unnecessary for us to dwell upon Him in that connection, but if we advance to see the truth, the revelation of the House of God, the church, brought in especially through the apostle Paul, we are able to see how closely and strictly God kept to this principle. I wonder if it has ever struck you what a difference there was between the apostle Paul and the apostle John in relation to their particular and peculiar ministries. Paul as a man is very much in view. Of course, there is a sense in which it is quite wrong for a man to be in view, for the man to be obtruding himself upon the consciousness of others, but in the case of Paul the wrong element is strangely absent. The man is kept very much in view, and yet you never feel anything in the nature of assertiveness, the bringing of himself as himself to bear upon you; you never feel irritated by his presence, and yet he is very much in view. He speaks about himself. No apostle uses the personal pronoun more than Paul, or as much, and he seems to keep himself in view. Go through his life and see how much autobiography there is. Not only so, but the Holy Spirit seems to keep Paul in view.

That is because of two things, as I understand it. One is the church, as God's object, is brought into view particularly through Paul, and the other is the need of the cross to be seen working, over against the man, to show the nature and elements of the church. The church as God's object is brought into view particularly through Paul. Now it is necessary for the Lord to get an object lesson of what the church is to really administer in a life where the elements and the nature of the church are. It is not enough for a man to develop a teaching about something; it is not enough for Paul to be given a revelation of the church and then to talk about his revelation. Paul must be taken hold of in relation to his revelation, and made an object lesson of that revelation and he must, therefore, be made an object lesson concerning the church. The Holy Spirit brings the man, who is the message, right up in front of you and keeps him there, and then begins to deal with that man to show you what the church is and what the church is in that man. So that what you find in Paul is the outworking of the principles of the church.

Take the point of humility. Look at Paul according to nature, look at Saul of Tarsus. You have anything but a man marked by humility, you have a man vindicating himself, assertive, aggressive, domineering, forceful, coming out into the light, displaying himself before the world. All that is in Paul by nature, and the Holy Spirit keeps him in view and allows him, perhaps causes him, to keep himself in a certain sense in view. Then what do you see? It is as though the Lord were taking up the cross and hammering Paul, hammering at all that pride, breaking it and bringing out in this man's life a beautiful humility. Saul of Tarsus is not dependent, he is not suppliant. He is a man of independence, very great independence of judgement, of purpose, of manner, of spirit, of mind, of will, of way. All that is in Paul by nature. From time to time you get a little touch of it even when he is Paul the apostle, but you notice one thing. Here is a man who naturally is so independent, so proudly independent, who has been smitten, and smitten, and smitten by the Lord, and he is steadily moving to a place of utter dependence, until you meet Paul in the place where he confesses his utter dependence upon the Lord for his own physical life, for all that he knows. How the wisest men have erred in putting it down to the marvellous intellect of Paul! Paul would say, "I received it not of men." This did not come through the flesh. This is not the result of learning, but received by revelation of Jesus Christ. "...It pleased God... to reveal his Son in me..." Paul will attribute everything to the Lord, and will say that he is utterly dependent upon the Lord for all strength, and all energy, and all life, and all knowledge, all wisdom, all understanding, everything. That keeps a man very humble. The Lord keeps that man at short accounts with Himself. The man does not know what he is going to do, he does not know in himself, he has to get direction from the Lord for each step. He keeps himself so free unto the Lord, that the Lord is able to change the course of things at a moment. He is dependent upon the Lord for his guidance every day. If you met him any day and asked him where he is going he would say, I do not know, I am waiting for the Lord. The Lord can indwell and can establish a man like that.

In the man through whom the first full revelation of the church came there had to be wrought the principle of the church. The church is a thing for the dispensation, and the Lord must point to that man and say, This is the church, this is what God's dwelling place is, something without any pride in it, and the absence of pride is marked by an utter dependence upon the Lord. What is one of the great features of dependence upon the Lord? It is prayerfulness. A prayerless life is a life which has not recognised its dependence upon the Lord. A life of prayer is a life which has come to see that it cannot go on far without the Lord.

That is why I believe the Lord has ordained prayer as His way of working and meeting the need. He has said, in effect, You have to live by Me. If you can go on without Me all right, go on; but for My purpose you have to live by Me. Prayer is our way of showing that we are dependent upon the Lord, and it is the way by which, therefore, the Lord comes in and manifests Himself.

If you look again at Paul's revelation of the church, the Body of Christ, you will see how he lays down the principle of dependence, interdependence, mutual dependence, and how he strikes strong blows against anything in the nature of independence, separateness. The Body is one, and no member in the Body can say to another, I have no need of you. Every member must say, I am dependent upon you. The hand cannot take the place of the foot. The whole body is constituted to demonstrate the law of dependence. That is humility. The opposite of that is striking out on your own, being a freelance and snapping your fingers at anybody and everybody else, and doing without them. That is pride, and it is deception.

Pride is shown in possession or possessiveness; that is, taking hold of things to govern them ourselves, to be in possession of them. It is the work in Adam, and it is in all of us. It is shown in the desire to have in our own possession, to have in our own power, to have under our own hand, under our own influence, and it is a terrible thing. It is in us all by nature more or less, and the ruin of the church has come along this line of men wanting to take charge, men wanting to possess, men wanting to bring their influence to bear upon things, so that the thing comes into their hold. It is the ruin of the church. It was the ruin of the race. It was the ruin of Satan.

There is nothing like that about the Lord Jesus. His was a letting go to the Lord, a letting go to the Father all the time. Listen to some of the sublime things that He said: "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me...". There is no fret about that, no strain, no hurried, feverish, excitable rushing about to get people, to get members, to build up something, to get people to join, to make a success of things: "All that the Father giveth me shall come...". It was a letting go to the Father. It is faith. That is not mere passivity, but faith in the Father. It is our inborn desire to have a sphere of power, of influence, of domination, of government, that causes us to try to get something, to get hold of something, to possess something, to see something, to have something, to see the work grow, to see a success. We are really out all the time in some way or other to bring people to our end, under our influence, to dominate them. There was nothing of

that about the Lord Jesus.

It is a mark of the house of God that there is no strain to possess for the sake of possession, to have power, to have mastery, to hold something. That is mine! Do not touch this—it is mine! The Lord Jesus had nothing in Himself, and wanted nothing for Himself, but He had everything in the Father. His attitude was, Father, if You want Me to have that You will give it to me. I am not going to strive, and worry, and manipulate, and work, and plan, and scheme, and be all the time anxious to have it. If You want Me to have that I trust You to give it to Me, and what You do not want Me to have I do not want! That is the attitude of Christ, and that is how the church was built, how the Lord builds His church. We must be very careful that this natural possessiveness does not come up in the things of the Lord. It works up unconsciously, even in our desire for spiritual blessing. It is to possess something in order that, having it, we may have greater influence, we may be something more, that we may become a dominating factor, that we may be recognised. Even a desire for holiness may have a subtle snare in it, that if we are holy it will be noted that we are holy, said that we are holy.

We cannot track this thing down, and we do not always want to be tracking this thing down and being introspective in this way, but we can take it that a hallmark of humility is self-emptying.

Take Paul. He was dependent, and self-emptied. There is a wonderful glory about emptiness when the Lord does it. It is not always a glorious feeling to feel empty, but it is marvellous how the Lord gets glory through emptying us, and keeping us emptied, until He wants us full. One of the things that the apostle said to the Corinthians in a kind of irony was: “Ye are full... ye have reigned as kings without us.” That was no compliment. They are not to be admired for that. It was pride. “We are accounted as the offscouring of all things.” “Ye are full... ye have reigned as kings without us.” Yes, but after all what was it the Lord said to the church at Laodicea? “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

There is an emptiness which brings much glory to God, and humility is being poor in spirit. “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” God dwells with such as are of a broken and contrite spirit. God-centredness is the opposite of self-centredness, that all our wellsprings, all our resources, our everything is in the Lord, and all our interests are in the Lord. As

for self-exaltation, the Lord made Himself of no reputation, He humbled Himself.

To return to the apostle Paul again. How he abased himself, got right down even before those who owed everything to him and yet were treating him so scurrilously. He had gone right down before them, humbled himself, abased himself, and went through, and won them by that means.

You see what the House of God is, this temple of God. If Paul brings in the great revelation of the temple, the church, the House of God, then he must be made an object lesson of its principles, and the first great principle of Christ wrought in Paul, and therefore to be reproduced in the House of God, is humility in all its aspects, dependence, emptiness, God-centredness.

What are the results? If pride, with these various aspects, led to death, then humility after this kind, that which Paul calls “the meekness of Christ”, leads to life. Life by humility, life by meekness, death by pride. “God beholdeth the proud afar off”, “Pride is an abomination unto the Lord”. If pride puts us away back there, there is not much hope of life. When pride is out of the way God draws near, and there is life. We have more to say about life later.

If, again, the result of pride in ruin was darkness, then humility, meekness, is the way of light. “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” You will learn by that spirit. It is enlightening. We said that the great law which governed everything was that of heart fellowship with the Lord, and we saw that that heart fellowship was broken by pride in the heart, the heart lifted up in pride. Now, says the apostle, “the eyes of your heart being enlightened”. This is heart fellowship with the Lord, bringing about enlightenment, leading to enlightenment, or making possible enlightenment.

Now a closing word of special emphasis upon the greater significance of pride and humility. It might be thought that we were just talking about the common virtues of the Christian life, and the common evils of human nature, but they are far bigger than that. We must remember that we are dealing here with Christ and Antichrist. We are getting back before man was created and seeing in the eternal counsels of God Christ as God’s chosen, God elect, Who was to bring God into dwelling in man. God was coming to dwell in man through His Son as in His Son. The whole thought and intention of the incarnation is: “God with us”, “God manifest in the flesh”, and dwelling in man. That is bound up with Christ, and

that was in the eternal counsels of God. If God were going to dwell in man, and at some dateless point pride was found in the heart of Lucifer, and he reached out to occupy the place which God had appointed for Christ, that he should dwell in man as God, you have two lines at once starting off: the line of God indwelling man; and the whole course of demon possession, Satan seeking to gain entrance into human life and make it his tabernacle, his dwelling. Those are two courses of history. We are familiar with them. We know they are true. If you do not believe in demon possession, there are some places we could send you to where you would have your unbelief very quickly dispensed, but there is the history. We are not going to dwell upon it, but it is a fact. It is Christ and Antichrist.

What is Antichrist? In the full development of Antichrist it is Satan incarnate as God dwelling in man, being worshipped (mark you) as God in man. What is it that moves toward that? It is this evil thing of which we have been speaking: pride. What is pride? Pride is the elevation of man. So that Antichrist is the elevation of man to the place of God. All these things that we have said about pride, independence, relate to that. Independence is man assuming personal rights, prerogatives, acknowledging no greater authority than himself, bowing to no one, a law unto himself, drawing things to himself in possessiveness, having them under his control, in his own hand, all things centred in himself and working toward self-exaltation. Pride in its simplest forms has all those elements, and it has only to grow. That is the soul of man by nature. That soul has only to exert itself or assert itself and you get a development of Antichrist, or the spirit of Antichrist.

I wonder if you know of any outstanding example, (though it is true in a smaller measure of all of us), where a man asserts his soul force tremendously to possess, to influence, to dominate, to have his way, to get his thoughts realised and accepted, his ideas adopted. It is not long before you find extra elements associating themselves with that man, something that is more than the man himself, egging him on, getting behind him and energising him until, while that man in himself to begin with was really not much, amongst men he would not have been regarded as a great man in himself, he has become a world figure and mysterious forces are at work, so that his words become slogans; people take them up and utter them. What are those forces? They are the satanic forces of Antichrist, and in measure there is a worshipping of him. The world will divide itself over several such men, and then the lesser will fall away until in all probability there will only be two; then there will come a clash, and the domination of one, Antichrist.

Where does it originate? In the soul force of man projecting itself, which gives Satan just what he wants to ally psychic forces, to bring him up to Antichrist. Antichrist is the full development, with Satan indwelling, the devil incarnate, apparently in dominion. Then Christ comes, and the clash between the two. What is it that marks the Christ? Is it this assertiveness, this personal drive? No. Christ is the Lamb, as it had been newly slain, and it is the Lamb Who shall overcome. What is a lamb? A lamb is dependent, in itself nothing.

The Lord will deal with us in this way. If the Lord is going to constitute us His temple, if we are really going to be a dwelling place of God; that is, not to be brought to ruin, but to be established, to become a part of that tabernacle of God coming down from God out of heaven, God dwelling with man, what will the Lord do with us? He will destroy our independence, empty us of our self-sufficiency, bring us to the place where we have nothing in ourselves and our all in Himself. That is where His Son was and that is why Christ triumphed. God allied Himself with that One, and whereas man thought that they were dealing with a poor, weak human, they came up against Almighty God. That was the issue.

That is what the enemy has to reckon with. It may look like a poor fragment, a poor remnant of humanity, weak, persecuted, helpless, but he will find God there. That is why we said there is something mighty about humility, dependence, emptiness, when its everything is in the Lord. It is then that the forces of evil have God to reckon with, not with us. How shall we overcome? By standing by and fighting? We said just now that what is true of these outstanding examples is true in a smaller measure of us all. I wonder how many of you have fought to have your own way, believing that it was the Lord's way. You may have thought that a certain course would be the Lord's way, and you fought with all the heat of your being, with all the tenacity of your strength of will, and some heat of flesh. I ask you, do you wish you had never fought? Do you today wish that you had never entered into that fight like that? You can answer your own heart. I know that to this day I have regretted that ever I asserted my will, to have things as I thought they ought to be. What happened? I did not win. I may have got what I was after, but I lost; and it may be that I got something that I would rather be without today. It may be place, or some particular position, and we thought it would be all good, all to the glory of God, and so we set ourselves to have it. It would have been better to let go everything to the Lord, and have taken this position, Now Lord, if You want me to have that, or be in that, I stand in absolute faith in You that You are able to do it, and I need not worry or fear.

The Lord is quite capable of seeing to it.

You see what the tabernacle of God is. It is God's dwelling place. It is where the Lord is everything, and in order for the Lord to be everything we must be nothing. Humility, meekness must be a big mark of such a House of God.

There are other things, but that is where we begin. May the Lord teach us His own lesson of humility.

Chapter 3 - Power in Witness

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:5-11

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." Eph. 1:20-23.

In our present meditation we are led to the question of power in witness. It is perhaps the major question for the church. It does not matter very much what the church may have, if it is without power it is without effect, and for the fulfilment of its purpose, the justification of its existence, it must be an expression, an instrument of the power of God in Christ as exalted.

When we speak of the church, let us not get far away ideas. We must remember that the church functions in representation, though that representation may only be in two. Peter and John, for instance, as in Acts 4, were not just men by themselves, they were functioning in relation to the church, and the church was in expression by them at that time. You notice that the Holy Spirit is very true to that principle in the whole of that story. Being led they went to their own company, and told them all that the rulers had said, and the company, when they heard these things, took up the whole matter in prayer before the Lord. They did the praying. It does not say that Peter and John did it, but when the company heard they prayed and took up the Psalm and brought it to the Lord in relation to the present situation. So that it was the church operating. The whole setting of

things there is that of the church, and it was functioning by representation in just two. Two is the divine meaning for representation, and the whole question is that of the church functioning in power, even though it may only be by two or three, or by a small company. It, after all, is the church's testimony which is to be represented there, and that is to be an expression of divine power.

The Lord would have us marked by spiritual power. Not by mighty words, but by mighty deeds. These are the tokens of God's Kingdom, and, of course, power always has been a very living matter, question, interest for the people of God, and it is a matter about which the Lord would exercise the hearts of His people again in these days. We believe He is doing that in many parts; we may say, perhaps, all over the world the Lord's honest people are exercised on the matter of spiritual power. To put it another way, they are concerned about the lack of power, the spiritual weakness, the ineffectiveness, and they are crying for a new visitation of the Holy Spirit, with the desire that there should be a fresh manifestation of divine power. Now the Lord has some light to shed upon this matter of power, for He does not just give power willy-nilly, or as something in itself, and He does not give the Holy Spirit on any basis at all as the Spirit of power, but He always has a background and a foundation for the exercise of power, and we need to know, and the rest of the Lord's people need to know, what the Lord's basis of power really is.

Taking such a chapter as Acts 4 as an illustration, you will notice that while power is in evidence, and power is the feature of the church in those days, that power was related to the Name of Jesus. Six times in that chapter reference is made to the Name of Jesus. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." It was a question of the Name, that by what authority and in what name they had done this thing. Peter's answer was: "Be it known unto you all... that by the name of Jesus Christ... doth this man stand here before you whole." It was a question of the Name which was also the question of the authority that produced this, the superior title, the superior authority, the superior Name by which this power was being manifested. So that power was bound up with the Name of Jesus.

When we turn to the letter to the Philippians, and to the passage in Ephesians, we are given an insight into the moral and spiritual basis of the Name, and therefore of power in the church, and we are given a very wide, a very vast range of insight. We are told, first of all, that Jesus of Nazareth before times eternal subsisted in the very form of God. You have to go back there for your first

insight into the question of power, as to Who Jesus of Nazareth is from eternity. He subsisted in the form of God; that is, all the essential attributes of Godhead, of deity, were His. John makes the thing utter, as we know: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” There is nothing to add to that. Paul puts it this way: “Who subsisted in the form of God”. So that Jesus of Nazareth from eternity is Very God, and nothing which has happened in the course of the cycle of history, the history of His person, has altered that.

The next phase makes no difference to that basic and eternal fact. When we see Him coming out from His eternal place as God, and being found in fashion as a man, taking the form of a servant, emptying Himself, that makes no difference to the original, basic fact. Let us be perfectly clear about this. I do not want to enter upon any theological arguments, but we must be perfectly clear about this, that Jesus of Nazareth is still from eternity God in all the essential attributes of deity, of Godhead, and He has not emptied Himself of those attributes, He has not emptied Himself of Godhead. When the Word says that He emptied Himself, that clearly relates to form and not to person. He existed, or subsisted, in the form of God; now He is in the form of man, and that is all that is meant by emptying Himself; and it is a big enough emptying for anybody to consider. You cannot contemplate any greater emptying than that. He Who had subsisted in God-form, now is in man-form, but He is still God in man-form.

The humility did not begin when He took man-form. The humility began before that: “...who, subsisting in the form of God, counted it not something to be grasped to be on equality with God...”. There was no pride about His position. Of course, this is said quite obviously as over against Satan in the first instance, who grasped at equality with God, and that was his pride. There was no personal, self-glorifying in the position of the Lord Jesus, no self-exaltation, no grasping at something for Himself. That is where the humility of God is found. God is no vaunting, proud, self-glorifying Being.

What we are seeking to make clear is this, that humility is not just a feature of man, it is a feature of God; it is a divine thing, a thing which belongs to God. Humiliation and humility are two different things. The humiliation of the Lord Jesus is one thing; His humility is another thing. His humility is eternal, it comes out of eternity, and it belongs to His very Godhead.

Now you notice that He, back there in eternity, was marked by this humility that

counted it not something to be grasped at to be on equality with God; but then He emptied Himself, and being found in fashion as a man He humbled Himself. You notice the difference. There was humility in Godhead, but that humility has come into manhood, and is going ever deeper. There is a humility which belongs to heaven, but when you bring that humility out of heaven here into a condition such as this world is in, and humble yourself to this state, that is getting very low, that is going down very deep. He humbled Himself when found in fashion as a man. As God He emptied Himself, as Man He humbled Himself. What a depth! Satan and Adam sought to exalt themselves to be equal with God. Here is One Who did not grasp at this equality with God, but emptied Himself.

Then, (not as our translation says, "...he... became obedient...") "...becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross", we see that His whole life was a life of continuous emptying unto the obedience of the cross. His whole life here was a life with the cross in view, which required continuous obedience unto death. Death as it were was going on all the time, and He knew it. It was before Him, and He was continually to be obedient unto it. How often temptations came to Him, to turn Him aside from that way of death. A disciple would say to Him: "Far be it from thee". It is a temptation not to be obedient unto death. In the wilderness the devil three times tempted Him along the line which was other than a line of obedience unto death, to reach His end by another course. He was becoming obedient all the time up to the final act of obedience unto death, and that meant constant humbling of Himself as a Man, when He might have been exalted, when they would have exalted Him, when they would have made something of Him, when He could have made something of Himself. Satan said, "Cast thyself down..."; if You do You will be preserved, and You will come down among this people and everyone will come to You and say, This is God! But He was obedient unto death, by the way of humbling, obedience, emptying.

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name." He subsisted in God-form, He took the form of man; now in a strange way, which is always the mystery of God and of the person of Christ, which you and I will never understand in this life, there has come about a union between God and man in Christ, so that here in the exaltation it is not the exaltation of God to glory, it is the exaltation of Christ as Man, Son of Man: Man with God allied, God joined, God and Man together. So that Jesus still bears the Name, but it is Jehovah-Jesus, it is God and Man united, Jesus of Nazareth with God's Name resting upon Him, Jehovah. It is a difficult thing to explain, and a very dangerous realm. It is necessary to protect that when you talk about God

and Man joined in one, but in His case it is true. It only becomes true in any measure in our case by reason of our union with Christ; it never becomes true of us in ourselves. We shall never have the attributes of Godhead and deity, but in Christ God allies Himself with man, and, as we have already said, to meet the man in Christ who is living on the basis of Christ exalted is to meet God. To meet the church, though it be in representation in two or three, when that representation is on the basis of Christ's exaltation, is to have to reckon with God. That is shown in Acts 4: "...Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. ...And now, Lord, behold their threatenings...". It is the ground of appeal on the part of a little company. What happens? The Lord comes in and shows that He is allied with this; the place where they prayed was shaken. God comes in on that ground of the exaltation of His Son, and on the basis of that there is power.

The point, of course, is just this, that power in the church—and for our present purpose that is power in the church as represented in two or three or more—is a matter of our standing upon the spiritual and moral ground of Christ's exaltation. What is that? Humility. What is humility? Utter emptiness of self. There is a tremendous power about humility when it is of this kind, when it is the humility of Christ. Christ is exalted by reason of His humility. There are various reasons given in the Word for the exaltation of Christ. In chapter 5 of the book of Revelation He receives glory and honour on the ground, or in virtue of, His redemption and His Blood. In the letter to the Hebrews it is because of the suffering of death, and having tasted death for every man, that He is crowned with glory and honour. In John 17 He says that He is glorified because He has glorified the Father on the earth. But in Philippians, while all that is involved, included, it is the Father Himself coming in and glorifying Him, exalting Him, honouring Him, on the ground of His humility. He humbled Himself, He emptied Himself. "Wherefore (on that ground) God hath highly exalted him...". It is a peculiar spiritual and moral basis of exaltation. The apostle takes hold of that and applies it to the situation at Philippi, and he says: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus".

What is power? How shall we know power? Power is bound up with the Name of Jesus. What is the Name of Jesus, the Name which is above every name, above every name in this age and that which is to come? It is that in which you find God and Man united. God was so with Him, that when you met the One you

met the Other, when you touched the Man you touched God, when you came up against the Man you came up against God, when you dealt with the Man you dealt with God. That is what is meant by the Name of Jesus. What is the basis? He humbled Himself. It is humility. We sought to define humility in our last meditation. Humility is selflessness in every sense, and in the fullest sense.

It seems that it was necessary for the disciples to break down, and to be allowed to break down. Some of us have bitterly complained to the Lord that He has allowed us to break down, but there is another point of view. All these disciples had a very close association with the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh, and yet every one of them broke down: “They all forsook him and fled.” “It is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered.” They all broke down, and it is a sorry picture that meets our eye after Christ had been crucified and buried. It is a sorry picture of those disciples, but it would seem that it was necessary. Peter had a good deal of confidence in what he could do, and how far he could go. He was very sure of himself. They all had to come to the place where it was perfectly clear to them that there was nothing in them that could go through, that they could not stand up to things, that they were as weak as water when it really came to the crucial test. That had to be demonstrated in their very experience. It was essential to the afterward. If we have complained that we have known weakness and failure and breakdown, there is a divine providence in that. It is the Lord’s way of bringing us to the place where we may know power, because power is not in us, it is in Christ, and we can never know power in Christ until we have discovered the depth of our own impotence, the reality of our own worthlessness. We have to be humbled in order to learn humility, dependence upon the Lord.

You notice that afterwards the Spirit makes perfectly clear the change. There were the marks of power, the marks of triumph. Where was the secret? In the Name of Jesus. It was all Christ, it was all in the exalted Lord that was the basis, and they had learned their lesson and knew that in themselves there was no power, no strength. There was a wonderful change after the emptying of those men by the cross, and then the bringing of them to the place where, not in themselves but in Him as exalted, it was possible to go on and to triumph.

The Name, with all its glory, and all its majesty, and all its power, is based upon humility. It derives its strength, its gain, on the very ground of humility, self-emptying. If you and I did know and realise it, humility is one of the greatest, if not the greatest and most important thing for any life that is going to be used by

God as a witness to the power of Christ. Unless God has that basis it is a desperately dangerous thing for us to know power. There is all that in us which will use power and turn it to our own glory and our own exaltation. It is a terrible thing to taste of the heavenly gift unless there is a right foundation, and the only foundation which makes us safe is that of self-emptiness, humility. Let us seek from the Lord continually much humility, true humility, the meekness of Christ. This is the moral basis of power. The opposite of that was the pride of Satan, and the pride of Adam, and that was the moral (or the immoral) basis of the ruin.

When we talk about power we must not think of God just baptizing us with something we call power, or with the Holy Spirit for the purpose of power, but we must remember that God must have His foundation, and that foundation is provided by the cross, the cross which smites us, and smites all in us that would take hold of the things of God to use them for ourselves, unto our own ends. The cross must do that work and bring about a true humility. We must, therefore, ask the Lord to keep the cross operative continually in our life: “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus...”. “I die daily.” This cross of Christ was a continuous thing with Him. It operated by various means: “Lest by reason of the revelation I should be exalted above measure, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me...”. It is the work of the cross, the principle of the cross, to break that “I”, and to keep it down so that no pride should mar the vessel and destroy the power.

In the humility wrought by the cross we are brought into oneness with the exalted Christ, and oneness with the exalted Christ means that God is committed to man. That is a tremendous thing. Two or three, on the basis of the cross, on the moral basis of Christ’s exaltation, who are emptied, weak, but confident in Him, should mean that when they bring God into a situation, that situation encounters God, the men involved encounter God. It is a tremendous thing to realise God is committed to us. That is what union with Christ means, and the moral basis of union with Christ is death to self and the centre of self: that is, pride.

May the Lord teach our hearts anew with His Word.

I am quite sure that the emphasis is a very necessary one upon the matter of humility, as the way of exaltation, the basis of divine power. May the Lord speak it to our hearts.

Chapter 4

"And David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us: and let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul. And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people. So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjathjearim. And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjathjearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it. And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart. And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets. And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God. And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perezuzza to this day. And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me? So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obededom the Gittite. And the ark of God remained with the family of Obededom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obededom, and all that he had." 1 Chron. 13.

"Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever... And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it. For because ye did it not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order." 1 Chron. 15:2,12-13.

The whole of this incident, with all its meaning, has as its pivot the fragment in verse 6 of chapter 13: “...the ark of God Jehovah, that sitteth above the cherubim, that is called by the Name”. That last clause is the pivotal point of the whole matter. The margin gives a slightly different rendering, but whether it should read “that is called by the Name” or as the margin has it “where the Name is called on”, the practical issue is not in the least affected. What is meant is that it is the place where the Name is in supreme control, where the Name is the supreme factor. It is because of the Name having its seat there, because it is there that the Name of Jehovah is found, that everything converges at that point, and it becomes the pivotal point of the whole incident.

The ark and the mercy-seat, combining as they do the symbols of the human and the divine, set forth Jesus Christ as the meeting-place of God and man. We know what this ark was made of, and how it was made, and its constituents. We know of the shittim wood, which is always a type of humanity, manhood; overlaid with gold, which is always a type of Divinity; and the plate of gold resting upon it, which was the mercy-seat with its crown of gold. These are symbols of the human and the divine brought together in one object, and there the Name of the Lord is found.

Quite clearly it is one of God’s many pictures, illustrations, object-lessons by which in a symbolic way He has set forth His great truths and realities. The Old Testament abounds with these types, and symbols, and illustrations of great New Testament realities, and the ark, which I think we shall not be wrong in regarding as the supreme type and symbol of the Old Testament, brings Christ clearly before us. On the one side there is His humanity, on the other side His Deity, and these are joined in one. Then, as we have seen in the Word, upon Him the Name of Jehovah rests: “...has given unto him the name which is above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, things on earth and things under the earth”.

This little clause, bringing the ark into view, and the mercy-seat, and the covering cherubim, says to us that where the Name is called upon, where the Name is, the Name is there in virtue of the blood of the atonement. You will remember that once every year the high priest went in within the veil to the place where the ark and the mercy-seat were, with blood of atonement for the sins of the people, and sprinkled this blood upon the mercy-seat, and there God communed with him from above the mercy-seat.

The precious blood shed and sprinkled is the basis of the operation, the effective working; the mighty power of the Name of the Lord resting upon His Son, Jesus Christ. The Name functions by reason of the blood. The blood gives the Name its meaning and its value. Here God is found. We meet God in Christ on the ground of the atoning work of Christ, on the ground of the efficacy and virtue of the blood of Jesus Christ, and if we meet God in Christ as sinners, penitent, confessing our sin and sinfulness, we meet God in mercy. It becomes to us the place of mercy. It is the mercy-seat.

But there is another fact. You remember that there was a time when the Philistines captured the ark, and they put it in the temple of their god, Dagon. They looked into the ark to see what was in it. Here is fleshly curiosity, and approach, and interference with the things of God; not the approach of a penitent sinner, not the approach of a worshipper, not the approach of those who recognise the meaning and value of the blood of Jesus Christ, but simply the approach to this which represented Christ on the ground of no sense of sin, no confession of sin, no acknowledgment of the fact of cleansing by the precious blood. To those Philistines who so approached the ark it meant judgement: they were smitten with plagues, and their god Dagon came crashing down to the ground, broken to pieces in the presence of this ark.

The Lord Jesus is thus in type set forth as having a twofold effect according to our attitude towards Him. If our attitude towards Him is that of sinners recognising the value of His blood for our salvation and our cleansing, penitent, confessing, then we meet God and all the power of the Name of God in mercy, it is to us a mercy-seat where we find grace to help in time of need. But if our attitude toward Christ is that which is marked by an absence of the sense of sin, and need of salvation and cleansing, then Christ must mean judgement and destruction to us sooner or later, for He must be effective. God will see to it that, having sent His Son, He will be effective and sooner or later He will be our Advocate or our Judge.

You will probably have heard the story of a great English judge, Sir Monier Williams. There was a time when he was one of the most clever advocates of the British Bar. A man who was in serious trouble came to him when he was advocate, and asked him to take up his case. Sir Monier Williams took up his case, though it was a desperate one, fought the case in the courts and got him through. Some years afterwards the advocate had been exalted to the place of a judge, and the same man got into trouble again and went to him and said, Sir

Monier Williams, you remember me, and how years ago when I was in trouble you took up my case and got me clear. I am in trouble again, and I have come to you to do the same thing again. But Sir Monier Williams turned to him and said, My friend, in those days I was an advocate, today I am a judge, and that makes all the difference. I cannot take up your case now: I have passed beyond the stage of an advocate, I have come to be a judge.

You see, the Lord Jesus now is our Advocate with God, He that lives to make intercession for us in virtue of His precious blood. Today it may be grace, it may be mercy; the day is coming when He will be judge. It will be too late then for an Advocate, He will stand to judge in that day. You see there are two facts dependent upon our attitude toward the Lord Jesus as set forth as the ark and the mercy-seat, where God and man are brought together in oneness.

Having said that word concerning salvation, we pass on to the fuller meaning and value of that which is before us in relation to the Name and the testimony of Jesus. This testimony of Jesus in the power of the Name is deposited in the church; that is, the Lord's people according to His intention are meant to be the repository, the vessel, in which this testimony to the Name of the Lord is placed. Just as the ark was placed right at the centre of the whole multitude of Israel, and everything was focused upon that ark and concentrated there so the testimony of Jesus in the power of the Name of the Lord is committed, is deposited in the midst of the Lord's people, and is intended by the Lord to be an effective, a vital thing. There is all the difference between the truths about the Lord Jesus, both as to His person; that is, as to the union of humanity and deity in His person, and all other things about Him as to His work, His atonement, His blood, His Name; as teachings, as parts of a Christian doctrine and creed held by Christian people; and the fact of the living Christ in the power of the supreme, the transcendent Name operating actively in the midst of the Lord's people. These are two different things.

The Lord never intended just to deposit so many truths with His people, so that they should recite them, and say they believe this, and that, and something else, though they may all be quite true, and all relative to Christ and to God. What He intended was that the living, vital, active, energetic testimony of the Lord Jesus should be in the midst of His people, that there should be this thing in power, so that any Philistine approaching should meet the impact of God in the church, and penitent sinners coming should find mercy, salvation, deliverance. God has deposited the testimony of Jesus in the power of the Name with His people, and

His intention is that His people should be the vessel in which the *power* of the truth should be found: an active thing, an energetic thing, a thing which registers something of influence and effectiveness amongst the people of God.

Having said that we are able to look again at this story, and understand it, and allow its message of warning to come to our hearts.

First of all note David's mistake. David's mistake has been the mistake of Christendom, and is the mistake of so many of the Lord's people at different times. What was David's mistake? David's mistake was this, that he proceeded as though the testimony of the Lord was an organised movement to be carried forward by natural energies. He started with a consultation with men. They agreed, and then they made a new cart. They put the ark of the testimony thereon, and two men to drive it. The illustration is a perfect one. It is quite obvious as to what the mistake was. The cart was a contrivance of man to carry that which was of the Lord. Men are constantly seeking new carts for the things of the Lord; that is, a new method, a new piece of machinery, a new movement, a new organisation, a new enterprise, into which, or upon which to place the things of God, and it is a provision made by man for the things of God. That was David's mistake, and that is our mistake very often, and that has been the mistake of Christendom. That danger is an abiding danger, never very far from the things of God. There is no doubt that the Lord would have the ark brought into its right place. There is no question of the Lord's will for having His testimony where it ought to be, placed and not displaced. In other words, there is no doubt about it that He would have His Son, Jesus Christ, in all the power of the Name established at the heart of the life of His people. That is all right, but so often running very close to what is really a divine desire, a divine purpose, the will of God, there is this peril of bringing it about by man's means, in man's ways, according to man's ideas, as though it were something that man could really arrange and organise, just as they arranged that cart. They put it together, they brought its parts into an organised whole, and that is how we have been mistaken, and that is the danger which is always near a true work of God. It is just arranging it, that is all, just planning it, just organising it, just providing something out of our own minds, our own thinking, our own counselling, our own judgement for the carrying of this thing of God, this testimony of the Lord, something ordered and put together by man.

There is no question regarding the zeal, the motive, but does it not strike you very, very forcibly, does it not pull you up with a start as you read that David

played before the Lord with all his might? With all their might they played and sang before the Lord in this movement, and then the Lord smote the whole thing.

We may be tremendously energetic, we may be putting ourselves with all our might into something for the Lord, but that does not justify our own method, and that does not mean that the Lord overlooks a violation of principle. Oh, surely if we mean well and if we put ourselves with all our heart into the thing for the Lord, that is all the Lord wants, we are bound to get the blessing of the Lord! Not at all. The Lord is very jealous about His principles, because God's principles are not just arbitrary laws. He does not stick to a thing simply because He has laid it down, and will not move for anything or anybody. No! There lies behind every point that the Lord has marked some great spiritual meaning, something which is eternal. It is not just a profession for the moment, but there is some great spiritual divine factor there, to violate which would mean to upset the whole order of God. We shall see that in a moment. Zeal, and passion, and doing something for God with all your might, is not a guarantee that the Lord will bless it, and that it will be successful and go right through triumphantly. David and the men of Israel played and danced before the Lord with all their might, and not long afterward the whole thing was brought to a standstill, under arrest, death had entered in violent contradiction, death even in the presence of this zeal for God. It is terrible, it is startling.

This was all the fruit of zeal, of impulse for the Lord. It was the fruit of consultation with men. David consulted. Yes, and David discovered that he had started in a wrong way. In chapter 15 he makes it perfectly clear as to where his mistake was, where he went wrong: "For because ye bare it not at the first, Jehovah our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not according to the ordinance" (verse 13). We did not seek Him according to His ordinance. What then did we do? We consulted together. There is all the difference between seeking the Lord according to His ordinance, and consulting together as to how we may serve the Lord's interests. There is the difference of life and death. The one is life, the other is death. Surely that is a big enough difference to make us pause and ask a question, not as to whether we are zealous for the Lord, not as to whether we have right motives, not as to whether we have seen that we must do it with all our might, but are we sure we are on the right lines. Are we sure that we are doing it according to God's ordinance? Are we sure that it is God's method? Not just that it is God's desire, but God's way of reaching His desire. That is always a peril which is near to anything that is of God.

When men consult together about the things of the Lord and the work of the Lord, it will not be long before they will need a cart to carry out the result of their consultation, and the cart may be any one of a thousand things that men employ — a committee, a movement, or an institution; something that men bring together for the carrying out of all their own counsels, their own judgements for God, when all the time God has His method and His means settled, only waiting to be consulted.

This peril is very often something that creeps in unconsciously, comes in and operates unwontedly. It is not always just as this story would seem to make it appear. Things seem to be so deliberate here, so clear-cut, it was almost like an act, it was done. Very often it comes in unperceived, it gradually works in to something which is of God, and it comes in quite contrary to the wish and desire of those responsible. They find that almost without knowing it, and certainly without desiring it, they have become involved in a way of doing things in an order which was not God's, and is not what they intended, but there they are, they are in it, it has come about. And inasmuch as that is so, whether it is in an act or whether it is in a process, it is a movement away from the power of the Name. It means that the testimony works rather against than for such who are in that responsibility, that they are rather broken by it than established, lifted, energised by it. It is just possible that the testimony of the Lord may break those who carry it, because they have got on to wrong lines, because they have departed from the Lord's way of bearing His testimony.

We have to watch not only that we start well, but that we keep things clean all the way through, from man, from man's judgements, man's ideas, man's ways, by much prayer that the principle of the Philistine cart does not creep in and take the place of God's way. The things of God in this case meant death, because God's method was not followed or employed.

God's Instrument of Testimony

What is God's instrument of testimony? David came back to it: "Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath Jehovah chosen to carry the ark of God and to minister unto him for ever" (verse 2). God chooses men, spiritual men, living men. God is never found looking for things, for machines, for organisations; God is always looking for living men, spiritual men. The Levites were those who represented God's thought for His people. We know that the tribe of Levi was chosen to take the place of the firstborn of Israel,

and they became the firstborn tribe, so that the firstborn of every family in Israel, which represented before God the whole family, was gathered up in a representative tribe, and in the Levites it is as though all Israel were before the Lord in spiritual ministry.

That is God's thought for His people, a people in touch with Him, ministering to Him, a living people, a spiritual people, separated unto God, in intelligent cooperation with God. These are the Levites. That is God's method, God's means, to have men in living fellowship with God, spiritual men. That is the church according to God's thought, to bear the testimony. As the writer to the Hebrews says: "The church of the firstborn ones, whose names are written in heaven" (Heb. 12:23). The living church, born from above, in living union with God, is to be the vessel of the testimony of the Name, the mighty, the Almighty Name, of the Lord. That is God's means.

Now that is very testing, very searching. It means this, that you and I, to bear the testimony of Jesus in the power of God, in all the value and virtue of the Name, only have to be in living union with God, only have to be spiritual men and women. We cannot bear this testimony by being associated with some Christian organisation, whether we call it the church or anything else, by being attached to something of an organised character here on this earth called "Christianity". That is not the way. So many people think that to have a living ministry they have to belong to this or that or something else, be in a certain movement. God's way is living union with Himself, spiritual men and women, and when that obtains, when that is the case, then His testimony is there.

It is spontaneous. Read the book of the Acts again, and you will find nothing whatever about a constituted movement, an organised campaign, a church ordered by men. What you find is men and women brought into living union with God in Christ, and then the mighty power of the Name at work in a spontaneous way. That is the Lord's method, and that is very simple, and quite enough. For men and women to be in living, spiritual fellowship with God, that is God's way, God's means of expressing the power of the Name, of maintaining the testimony of Jesus, such as have come to spiritual and intelligent fellowship with God. That is the essential, the indispensable means of God for His testimony.

How we have departed from God's simple basis—and because of that what has happened? We are discovering, and Christendom is discovering, that God is

jealous. When God smote Uzzah it was God showing His jealousy for His Name, His jealousy for His testimony. First of all God's jealousy for His testimony is shown by His refusal to take responsibility for anything that is not according to His own mind and order. You produce your mission, your cart, your organisation, and you begin to take up the things of God. Very well, you have taken responsibility; you will have to provide the two men to drive it; and you may take it that you are involved in a very responsible business, and will have to carry that responsibility, because God will not do it. God did not prevent the oxen from stumbling, He did not prevent this thing from getting into a precarious situation, He did not step in to save the thing from collapse. They had provided the cart, and they had to take responsibility. God does not do it. Mark you, there is bound to be a point where things reach a crisis, and where man has to seek to save the whole situation which he has created. God will see to that. I do not think it is a mere incident, a mere hap, a mere chance that the oxen stumbled. God's sovereignty is behind a good many of the crises that arise, and in the long run we thank God for those crises. We thank God that our oxen did stumble; we learn the big lesson of our lives.

Here it is, a thing which man has tried to do for God by his own means and methods, in his own way, and it is bound to reach a crisis, and is bound to come to the place where everything becomes very precarious for his undertaking, and God is not there to protect, to save; it is discovered that God is not taking responsibility for it.

But more than that. When that crisis comes, when that situation arises, and man tries to save the things of God, he finds that he meets God, and God shows him there and then that he cannot handle the things of God in this way, to run them, and to preserve them; and God smote Uzzah there, and Uzzah died "before the Lord". This is death coming in on the whole project, the whole thing coming under death. Dare we again think back? They were singing, playing, dancing before the Lord, with all their might, and God smote the whole business with death. It is hardly realisable. If it were not in the Word of God we should hardly dare to say this. This is God's jealousy for spiritual principles. Living men and women; that is, men and women who know the Lord in a living way, and are in living fellowship with Him, should be His instrument of testimony; not dead, cold things made by man, not things driven by natural energies, represented by the oxen and the men who drove them, but spirituality, life; these are the basic factors in God's way.

This incident has some deep and strong lessons for us all. I know quite well that the Lord is speaking to all our hearts on this matter, and it is for us to safeguard in these days. You cannot make something to carry the testimony of the Lord. You cannot make people carry the testimony of the Lord. You cannot gather them into Bible institutions and make them vessels of testimony. Only God can make spiritual men and women, living men and women, men wrought for this purpose. We must take our hands off one another, and leave them to the Lord. If it were something else we could get together and take counsel together, and we could arrange a scheme, an enterprise, and get beautifully organised, and launch it, and carry it on; but that is like a Philistine cart, and in the testimony of Jesus that cannot be done with the guarantee that God will sponsor it and take responsibility for it. God must constitute us a vessel on the basis of life and knowledge of Himself, and no man can do that, no man can make that sort of thing, only God.

So we stand back from one another and let the Lord do it. Much as we would like to help we can do very little; we have to let the Lord do it, and make men and make women, and when the Lord has made them there is the power of the Name. You cannot fit men to bear the Name, only God can fit men for that. It is a matter of the testimony of the Name in mighty energy and power being borne by men and women who are alive unto the Lord, and in intelligent fellowship with Him. Anything other is bound to break down, to go wrong, and what is more to come under the judgement of God sooner or later.

May the Lord save us from that tragedy, and keep us in that close touch with Him where, not consulting together, but enquiring of the Lord, we are made vessels of the testimony according to His order.