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Spiritual Sight

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Chapter 1 - The Man Whose Eye is Opened

"Then Jehovah opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of Jehovah standing in the way" (Num. 22:31).

"Balaam the son of Beor saith, and the man whose eye is opened saith... falling down, and having his eyes open" (Num. 24:3-4; A.R.V. Margin).

"And they come to Jericho: and as He went out from Jericho, with His disciples and a great multitude, the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the way side... And Jesus answered him, and said, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? And the blind man said unto Him, Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." And Jesus said unto him, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And straightway he received his sight, and followed Him in the way" (Mark 10:46, 51-52).

And He took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village; and when He had spit on his eyes, and laid His hands upon him, He asked him, Seest thou aught? And he looked up, and said, I see men; for behold them as trees, walking. Then again He laid His hands upon his eyes; and he looked stedfastly, and was restored, and saw all things clearly" (Mark 8:23-25).

"And as He passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth… and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam... He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing... He therefore answered, Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:1, 7, 25).

"...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:17-18).

"I counsel thee to buy of Me gold refined by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou

mayest see" (Rev. 3:18).

"...to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Me" (Acts 26:18).

I think the phrase used by Balaam might very well stand at the head of our present meditation - "the man whose eye is opened".

The Root Malady of Our Time

As we contemplate the state of things in the world today, we are very deeply impressed and oppressed with the prevailing malady of spiritual blindness. It is the root malady of the time. We should not be far wrong if we said that most, if not all, of the troubles from which the world is suffering, are traceable to that root, namely, blindness. The masses are blind; there is no doubt about that. In a day which is supposed to be a day of unequalled enlightenment, the masses are blind. The leaders are blind, blind leaders of the blind. But in a very large measure, the same is true of the Lord's people. Speaking quite generally, Christians are today very blind.

A General Survey of the Ground of Spiritual Blindness

The passages which we have just read cover in a general way a great deal, if not all, of the ground of spiritual blindness. They begin with those who never have seen, those born blind.

Then there are those who have been given vision, but are not seeing very much, nor very clearly - "men as trees walking" - but who come to see yet more perfectly under a further work of grace.

Then there are those who have true and clear sight as far as it goes, but for whom a vast realm of Divine thought and purpose still waits upon a fuller work of the Holy Spirit. "That He would grant unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him; having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe." Those words are addressed to people who have sight, but for whom this great realm of Divine meaning still waits upon their knowing a fuller work of the Holy Spirit in the matter of spiritual sight.

Then, again, there are those who have seen and have followed, but who have lost spiritual sight, of which they were once possessed, and are now blind, but with the most fatal additional factor: they think they see and they are blind to their own blindness. That was the tragedy of Laodicea.

Further, there are those two classes represented by Balaam and Saul of Tarsus, from whom we have quoted. Balaam, blinded by gain, or the prospect of gain. That is, I think, what is meant in the New Testament by following in the way of Balaam; being taken up so much with the question of gain and loss as to be blind to the great thoughts of God and purpose of God, not seeing the Lord Himself in the way, and by his blindness coming very near to being smitten down on the road. The statement is quite definite there. Balaam did not see the Lord until the Lord opened his eyes, and then he saw the Lord. "The angel of the Lord": that is the way which it is put. I have not much doubt but that it is the Lord Himself. Then he saw. Later he made that double statement about the matter - "the man whose eye is opened," "falling down and having his eyes open." Such is Balaam, a man blinded by considerations of a personal character, of a personal nature, how things would affect him. That is what it amounts to. And what a blinding thing that is where spiritual matters are concerned. If ever you or I pause on that question, we are in very grave peril. If ever for a moment we allow ourselves to be influenced by such questions as, how will this affect me, what will this cost me, what do I stand to get out of this or to lose by this? That is a moment when darkness may very well take possession of our hearts and we go in the way of Balaam.

Then, on the other hand we have Saul of Tarsus. There is no doubt about his blindness; but his was the blindness of his very religious zeal, his zeal for God, his zeal for tradition, his zeal for historic religion, his zeal for the established and accepted thing in the religious world. It was a blind zeal about which afterward he had to say, "I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). "I thought I ought." What a tremendous turn round it was when he discovered that the things which he thought, and passionately thought he ought to do, in order to please God and to satisfy his own conscience, were utterly and diametrically opposed to God and the way of right and truth. What blindness! Surely he stands as an abiding warning to us all that zeal for anything is not necessarily a proof that the thing is right, and that we are on the right road. Our very zeal as a thing in itself may be a blinding thing, our devotion to tradition may be our blindness.

I think eyes have a very large place in Paul's life. When his eyes spiritually were opened, his eyes naturally were blinded, and you can use that as a metaphor. The using of natural eyes religiously too strongly may be just the indication of how blind we are, and it may be that, when those natural eyes religiously are blinded, we will see something, and not until they are do we see something. For a lot of people, the thing that is in the way of their real seeing is that they see too much and see in the wrong way. They are seeing with natural senses, natural faculties of reason and intellect and learning, and all that is in the way. Paul stands to tell us that sometimes, in order really to see, it is necessary to be blinded. Evidently that left its mark upon him, just as the finger of the Lord left its mark upon Jacob, for the rest of his days. He went into Galatia and later wrote the Letter to the Galatians; and you remember he said, "I bear you witness, that, if possible, ye would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me" (4:15); meaning that they noted his affliction, they were aware of that mark which had lasted from the Damascus road, and so felt for him, that if they could have done so, they would have plucked out their very eyes for him. But it is wonderful that the commission which came when he was naturally blinded on the Damascus road was all about eyes. He was blind, and they led him by the hand into Damascus; but the Lord had said in that hour, "to whom I send thee to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God".

Well, all these have their own message for us, but they cover the ground fairly generally in relation to spiritual sight. There are, of course, many details, but we will not seek to search those out at the moment; we will get on with this general consideration.

Spiritual Sight Always a Miracle

When we have covered the whole ground in a general way, we come back to notice one particular and peculiar feature in every case, and that is, that spiritual sight is always a miracle. That fact carries with it the whole significance of the coming into this world of God’s Son. The very justification of the coming into this world of the Lord Jesus Christ is found in the Word of God; because it is a settled matter with God Himself that man now is born blind. "I am come a light into the world" (John 12:46); "I am the light of the world" (John 9:5): and that statement, as you know was made right there in that section of John’s Gospel where the Lord Jesus is dealing with blindness. "When I am in the world, I am the light of the world", and He illustrates that by dealing with the man born blind.

So spiritual sight is a miracle from heaven every time, and that means that the one who really sees spiritually has a miracle right at the foundation of his life. His whole spiritual life springs out of a miracle, and it is the miracle of having sight given to eyes which never have seen. That is just where the spiritual life begins, just where the Christian life has its commencement: it is in seeing.

And whoever preaches must have that miracle in his history, and he himself is dependent entirely upon that miracle being repeated in the case of every one who listens to him. That is where he is so helpless and so foolish. Perhaps it is here that, in one sense, we find "the foolishness of preaching". A man may have seen, and may be preaching what he has seen, but no one listening to him has seen or does see: and so he is saying to the blind, See! And they see not. He is dependent entirely upon the Spirit of God coming and, there and then, working a miracle. Unless that miracle is wrought, his preaching is vain, so far as the desired effect is concerned. I do not know what you say when you come into a gathering and bow your head in prayer, but there is a suggestion for you. There may be present that which has come out of a miracle in the one who is giving it forth in preaching or teaching, and you may miss it all. The suggestion is that you ever and always ask the Holy Spirit to work that miracle in you afresh in this hour, that you may see.

But we go further. Every bit of new seeing is a work from heaven. It is not something done fully once for all. It is possible for us to go on seeing and seeing, and yet more fully seeing, but with every fresh fragment of truth, this work, which is not in our power to do, has to be done. Spiritual life is not only a miracle in its inception; it is a continuous miracle in this matter right on to the last. That is what arises from the passages we have read. A man may have had a touch, and, whereas before he was blind and saw nothing, now he sees; but he sees only a little, both in its measure and in its range, and he sees imperfectly. There is a certain amount of distortion about his vision yet. Another touch is required from heaven in order that he may see all things correctly, perfectly. But even then it is not the end, for such as are seeing things correctly, perfectly, within that measure, have yet possibilities from God of seeing such vast ranges. But is it still a spirit of wisdom and revelation which is required to effect it. All the way along it is from heaven. And who would have it otherwise, for is not this the thing which gives to a true spiritual life its real value, that there should forever remain in it the miraculous element?

The Effect of the Loss of Spiritual Sight

Then we come to that final word. To lose spiritual vision is to lose the supernatural feature of the spiritual life, and that produces the Laodicean state. If you seek to get to the heart of this thing, this state of things represented by Laodicea, neither hot nor cold, the state which provokes the Lord to say, "I will spew thee out of My mouth"; if you seek to get to the heart of it and say, Why is this, what is the thing lying behind this? The one thing that explains it is simply this, that it has lost its supernatural feature, it has come down to earth; it is religious, but it has come out of its heavenly place. And then, you see, you get the corresponding rebound to overcomers in Laodicea, "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne". You have gone down a long way to earth, you have lost your heavenly feature, but for overcomers in the midst of such conditions there is still a place above, showing the Lord's thought as over against this condition. To lose spiritual vision is to lose the supernatural feature of the spiritual life. When that has gone out, be as religious as you like, the Lord only has one word to say - Buy eyesalve: that is your need.

The Need of the Hour

That brings us, then, to the need of the hour, the need which, of course, is the need of every hour, of every day, of every age. But we are made more and more aware in our time of this need, and in a sense, we can say there never was a time when there was a greater need for people who could say and can say, I see! That is the need just now. Great and terrible is that need, and not until that need is met will there be any hope. Hope hangs upon this, that there would arise people in this world, this dark world of confusion and chaos and tragedy and contradiction, people who are able to say, I see! If there should arise a man today who had position, to exercise influence and be taken account of, and such a man who saw, what new hope would arise with him, what a new prospect! That is the need. Whether that need will be met in a public, national, international way or not, I do not know, but that need must be met in a spiritual way by people on this earth who are in that position, who really can say, I see!

You see, Christianity has so largely become a tradition. The truth has been resolved into truths and put into a Blue-Book, the Blue-Book of Evangelical Doctrine, a set and fenced up thing. These are the evangelical doctrines, they set the bounds of evangelical Christianity in preaching and in teaching. Yes, they are presented in many and various forms. They are served up with interesting and attractive anecdotes and illustrations, and with studied originality and uniqueness, so that the old truths will not be too obvious, but will stand some

chance of getting over because of the clothes in which they are dressed up; and a very great deal depends upon the ability and the personality of the preacher or the teacher. People say, I like his style, I like his manner, I like his way of saying things! - and much depends upon that: but when all those trappings have been stripped off, the stories, the anecdotes, the illustrations, and the personality and the ability of the preacher or teacher; when that has all gone, you have simply got again the same old things, and some of us come along and outdo the last man in the way of presenting them in order to gain for them some acceptance, some impression. I do not think that is unkind criticism, for that is what it amounts to; and no one will think that I am asking for a change or dismissal of the old truths.

But what I am trying to get at is this: it is not new truths, it is not the changing of the truth, but it is that there shall be those who, in presenting the truth, can be recognised by those who listen as men who have seen: and that makes all the difference. Not men who have read and studied and prepared, but men who have seen, about whom there is that which we find in this man in John 9 - the element of wonder. "Whether he is a sinner, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see". And you know whether a person has seen or not, you know where it has come from and how it has come: and that is the need: that something, that indefinable something, which works out in wonder, and you have to say, That man has seen something, that woman has seen something! It is that seeing factor which makes all the difference.

Oh yes, it is a far bigger thing than you and I have yet appreciated. Let me tell you forthwith that all hell is banded together against that, and the man who has had his eyes opened is going to meet hell. This man in John 9 was up against it at once. They cast him out, and even his own parents were afraid to take sides with him because of the cost. "He is of age, ask him". Yes, this is our son, but do not press us too much, do not involve us in this thing; go to him, get it cleared up with him, leave us alone! They saw a red light, and so they were seeking to by-pass this issue. It costs to see, and it may cost everything, because of the immense value of seeing to the Lord, and as against Satan, the god of this age, who hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving. It is the undoing of his work. "I send thee to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God". Satan is not going to take that, neither at the beginning nor in any measure. It is a tremendous thing, to see.

But oh, what a need today for men and women who can stand spiritually in the position in which this man stood and say, I was blind, but now I see, and this one

thing I know! It is a great thing to be there. How much I do not know, one thing I do know, I see! which was not the case before. There is an impact, a registration, with that. Life and light always go together in the Word of God. If a man really sees, there is life, and there is uplift. If he is giving you something secondhand, studied, read, worked up, there is no life in it, other than, perhaps, that temporary and false lift of interest, passing fascination. But there is no real life which makes people live.

So one does not plead for changing the truth or having new truths, but for spiritual sight into the truth. "The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word", which is true. Let me get rid of that thing which has been fastened upon us here if I can. We do not seek for new revelation, and we do not say or suggest or hint that you may have anything extra to the Word of God, but we do claim that there is a vast amount in the Word of God that we have never seen, which we may see. Surely everybody agrees with that: and it is just that - to see, and the more you see, really see, the more overwhelmed you feel about the whole thing, because you know that you have come to the borders of the land of far distances, lying far beyond a short lifetime’s power of experience.

Now just to close, let me repeat, that, at every stage from initiation to consummation, spiritual life must have this secret in it, I see! Right at the commencement when we are born again, that should be the spontaneous expression or ejaculation in the life. Our Christian life ought to begin there. But all the way along to the final consummation it must be that, the working out of this miracle, so that you and I are maintained in this atmosphere of wonder, the wonder-factor repeated again and again, so that every fresh occasion is as though we had never yet seen anything at all.

But I may as well say at once that usually a new breaking in of the Spirit in that way follows the eclipse of all that has gone before. It seems that the Lord has to make it necessary, so that we come to the place where we cry out, Unless the Lord shows, unless the Lord reveals, unless the Lord does a new thing, all that ever has been is as nothing, it will not save me now! Thus He leads us into a dark place, a dark time. We feel that what has been has lost the power which it once had to make us buoyant, triumphant. That is the Lord’s way of keeping us moving on. If you and I were allowed to be perfectly satisfied with what we have got at any stage, and not to feel the absolute necessity for something we never have had, should we go on? Of course not! To keep us going on, the Lord has to bring about those experiences where it is absolutely necessary for us to see the

Lord, and know the Lord in a new way, and it must just be so all the way along to the end. It may be a series of crises of seeing and seeing again, and yet again, as the Lord opens our eyes, and we are able to say, as never before, I see! So it is not our study, our learning, our book knowledge, but it is a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of our hearts being enlightened, and it is that seeing which brings the note of authority that is so much needed. That is the element, the feature, that is required today. It is not just seeing for seeing's sake, but it is to bring in a new note of authority.

Where is the voice of authority today? Where are those who are really speaking with authority? We are languishing terribly in every department of life for the voice of authority. The Church is languishing for want of a voice of spiritual authority, want of that prophetic note - Thus saith the Lord! The world is languishing for want of authority, and that authority is with those who have seen. There is far more authority in the man born blind seeing, in his testimony - One thing I know that, whereas I was blind, now I see - than there is in all Israel, with all Israel's tradition and learning. And may it not be that that was the thing about the Lord Jesus that carried such weight, for "He spoke as One having authority, and not as the Scribes" (Matt. 7:29). The Scribes were the authorities. If anybody wanted an interpretation of the law, they went to the Scribes. If they wanted to know what the authoritative position was, they went to the Scribes. But He spoke as One having authority, and not as the Scribes. Wherein lay that authority? Just that in all things He could say, I know! It is not what I have read, what I have been told, what I have studied, that is with power, but this - I know! I have seen!

The Lord make us all to be of those who have eyes opened.

Chapter 2 - The Issue of Spiritual Sight

Reading: Num. 24:3-4; Mark 10:46, 51-52; 8:23-25; John 9:1, 7, 25; Eph. 1:17-19; Rev. 3:17; Acts 26:17-18.

At the outset of our previous meditation we were speaking of the root-malady of our time, which is spiritual blindness. We took those passages which we have read and noted how they, in a very general way, cover the full ground of spiritual blindness and spiritual sight. Then we went on to speak about the common factor in all these cases, which is that spiritual sight is always a miracle. No one has real spiritual sight by nature. It is something which comes out of heaven as a direct act of God, a faculty which is not there naturally, but has to be created. So that the very justification for Christ's coming from heaven into this world is found in this fact, that man is born blind and needed a visitant from heaven to give him sight. Then, finally, to lose spiritual sight is to lose the miraculous element in the Christian life; which was the trouble with Laodicea. We went on to see that the great need of the hour is for those who really can say, I see! Imagine yourself being born blind and living perhaps to maturity without having seen anything or anyone, and suddenly having your eyes opened to see everything and everyone. The sense of wonder would be there; the world would be a wonderful world. I suppose when that man in John 9 went home, he would be constantly saying, It is wonderful to see people, wonderful to see all these things! Wonderful! That would be the word most on his lips. Yes, but there is a spiritual counterpart, and the great need is of people who have that spiritual wonder in their hearts all the time; that which has broken upon them by revelation of the Holy Spirit and is a constant and ever-growing wonder. It is a new world, a new universe. That is the need of the time - I see!

Well now, the final phase of our afternoon meditation was that which we are going to follow up a little now, that at every stage of the Christian life from initiation to consummation, the secret must just be that - I see: I never saw as I see now! I never saw it like that, I never saw it on this wise; but now I see! It must be like that all the way through, from start to finish, if the life is a true life in the Spirit. So for a little while let us think on one or two phases of the

Christian life which must be governed by this great reality of seeing by Divine operation; and you will be recalling a great deal of the Word as I speak, seeing how much there is in the Scriptures about this matter.

Seeing Governs the Beginning of the Christian Life

What is the beginning of the Christian life? It is a seeing. It must be a seeing. The very logic of things demands that it shall be a seeing; for this reason, that the whole of the Christian life is to be a progressive movement along one line, to one end. That line and that end is Christ. That was the issue with the man born blind in John 9. You will remember how, after they cast him out, Jesus found him, and said to him, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" and the man "answered and said, And who is He, Lord, that I may believe on Him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him and He it is That speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him." The issue of spiritual sight is the recognition of the Lord Jesus, and it is going to be that all the way through from start to finish.

We may say that our salvation was a matter of seeing ourselves as sinners. But had it been left there, it would have been a poor lookout for us. Or we may say that it is seeing that Christ died for sinners. That is very good, but not good enough. Unless we see Who Christ is, that subtle and fatal thing may find a lodgment in our hearts that asserts that many a British soldier died just as heroic a death for his fellows as Jesus died; not discerning or discriminating between the one and the other. No, the whole matter is summed up into seeing Jesus: and when you really see Jesus, what happens? What happened to Saul of Tarsus? Well, a whole lot of things happened, and mighty things which nothing else would have accomplished.

You would never have argued Saul of Tarsus into Christianity; you would never have frightened him into Christianity; you would never have either reasoned or emotionalised him into being a Christian. To get that man out of Judaism needed something more than could have been found on this earth. But he saw Jesus of Nazareth, and that did it. He is out, he is an emancipated man, he has seen. Later, when he is right up against the great difficulty of the Judaisers, tracking and following him everywhere to disturb the faith of his converts, to wreck their position in Christ, and they are inclined to fall away, if they have not already done so (I speak of those converts and churches in Galatia), he once again raises the whole question as to what a Christian is, and focuses it upon this very point

of what happened on the Damascus road. The Letter to the Galatians really can be summed up in this way: a Christian is not one who does this and that and another thing which is prescribed to be done; a Christian is not one who refrains from doing this and that and another thing because they are forbidden; a Christian is not one at all who is governed by the externalities of a way of life, an order, a legalistic system which says, You must, and You must not: a Christian is comprehended in this saying, "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me: (Gal. 1:15-16). That is only another way of saying, He opened my eyes to see Jesus, for the two things are the same. The Damascus road is the place. "Who art Thou, Lord? I am Jesus of Nazareth". "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me." That is one and the same thing. Seeing in an inward way: that makes a Christian. "God... hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). "In our hearts": Christ, so imparted and revealed within, is what makes a Christian, and a Christian will do or not do certain things, not at the dictates of any Christian law, any more than Jewish, but as led by the Spirit inwardly, by Christ in the heart. It is that that makes a Christian, and in that the foundation is laid for all the rest, right on to the consummation, because it is just going to be that growingly. So the foundation must be according to the superstructure; they are all of a piece. It is seeing, and it is seeing Christ.

That is a bald statement upon which a very great deal more might be said. But it is a challenge. We have to ask ourselves now, On what foundation does our Christian life rest? Is it upon something outward; something we have read, something we have been told, something we have been commanded, something we have been frightened into, or emotionalised into; or is it based upon this foundation, "it pleased God to reveal His Son in me"? When I saw Him, I saw what a sinner I am, and I saw too what a Saviour He is: but it was seeing Him that did it! I know how elementary that is for a conference of Christians, but it is good sometimes to examine our foundations. We never get away from those foundations. We are not going to grow up and be wonderful folk who have left all that behind. It is all of a piece. I do not mean that we stay at elementary things all our lives, but we take the character of our foundations through to the end. The grace which laid the foundation will bring forth the topstone with shoutings of Grace, grace! It will all be that; the grace of God in opening our eyes. I will not stay longer with that.

Seeing Governs Spiritual Growth

Let us pass on to growth. Just as the beginning is by seeing, so is growth. Spiritual growth is all a matter of seeing. I want you to think about that. We have to see if we would grow. What is spiritual growth? Well now, answer that carefully, in your heart. I think some people imagine that spiritual growth is getting to know a great deal more truth. No, not necessarily. You may increase in such knowledge as you grow it is true, but it is not just that. What is growth? Well, it is conformity to the image of God's Son. That is the end, and it is toward that that we are progressively and steadily and consistently to move. Full growth, spiritual maturity, will be our having been conformed to the image of God's Son. That is growth. Then if that be so, Paul will say to us, "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18). Conformity by seeing, growth by seeing.

The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Now that contains a very precious and deep principle. How can we illustrate? That very passage which we have just cited helps us, I think. The last clause will give us our clue - "as from the Lord the Spirit". I trust I do not use too hackneyed an illustration in trying to help this out when I go back to Eliezer, Abraham's servant, and Isaac and Rebekah, that classic romance of the Old Testament. You remember the day came when Abraham, getting old, called his faithful household steward, Eliezer, and said, 'Put now your hand under my thigh, and swear that you will not take of the women of this country for a bride for my son, but that you will go to my own kith and kin'. And he sware. And then Eliezer set out, as you know, with the camels for the distant Country across the desert, praying as he went that the Lord would prosper him and give him a sign. The sign was given at the well. Rebekah responded to the man, and when, after tarrying a bit and being confronted with the challenge quite definitely, she decided to go with the man, on the way he brought out from his treasures things of his master's house, things of his master's son, and showed them to her, and occupied her all the time with his master's son and the things which indicated what a son he was, and what possessions he had and what she was coming into; and this went on right across the desert until they reached the other side and came into the district of the father's home. Isaac was out in the field meditating: and they lifted up their eyes and saw; and the servant said, There he is! The one of whom I have been speaking to you all the time, the one whose things I have been showing you; there he is! And she lighted down from the camel. Do you think she felt strange, as though she had come from a far country? I think the

effect of Eliezer’s ministry was to make her feel quite at home, to make her feel that she knew the man she was going to marry. She felt no strangeness or distress or foreign element about this thing. They just merged, shall we say? It was the consummation of a process.

"As from the Lord the Spirit." The Lord Jesus said, "When He is come... He shall take of Mine, and show it unto you". "He shall not speak of Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak... He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:13-14). The Spirit, the faithful servant of the Father’s house, has come right across the wilderness to find the bride for the Son, of His own kith and kin. Yes, there is room for wonder here. "Since the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same" (Heb. 2:14). "Both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one" (Heb. 2:11). The Spirit has come to secure that bride now, one with Him, His flesh and His bone. But the Spirit desires to be occupying us with the Lord Jesus all the time, showing us His things. To what effect? That we shall not be strangers when we see Him, that we shall not feel that we are of one kind and He another, but that it may just be, ‘This is the last step of many which have been leading to this, and every step has been making this oneness more perfect, this harmony more complete’. At the end, without any very great crisis, we just go in. We have been going in all the time, and this is the last step. That is conformity to His image, that is spiritual growth; getting to know the Lord, and to become like Him, getting to be perfectly at home with Him, so that there is no clash, no strangeness, no discord, no distance. Oneness with our Lord Jesus deepening all the time unto the consummation: that is spiritual growth. You see, it is something inward again, and it is but the development of that initiation, that beginning. We have seen and are seeing, and seeing and seeing, and as we see we are changed.

Is that true of everything you think you see? We have to test everything we think we see and know by its effect in our lives. You and I may have an enormous amount of what we think to be spiritual knowledge; we have all the doctrines, all the truths, we can box the compass of evangelical doctrine; and what is the effect? It is not seeing, beloved, in a true spiritual sense, if we are not changed. Oh, that is the tragedy of so many who have got it all, but who are so small, so puny, so unkind, so cruel, so legalistic. Yes, seeing is to be changed, and it is not seeing if it does not bring that about. It would be far better for us to be stripped of all that and to be brought right down to the point where we really do see just a little that makes a difference. We must be very honest with God about this. Oh,

would we not sooner have just a very little indeed that was a hundred percent effective, than a whole mountain of knowledge, ninety percent of which counted for nothing? We must ask the Lord to save us from advancing beyond spiritual life, advancing, I mean, with knowledge, a kind of knowledge, presuming to know. You know what I mean. Real seeing, Paul says, is being changed, and being changed is a matter of seeing as by the Lord the Spirit. So we will pray to see.

Some of us knew our Bible, knew our New Testament, knew Romans, knew Ephesians, thought we saw. We could even lecture on the Bible and these books, and on the truths in them, and did so for years. Then one day we saw; and people saw that we saw, and said, What has happened to the minister? He is not saying anything different from what he has always said, but there is a difference; he has seen something! That is it.

Seeing Governs Ministry

And of course that must lead us to the next thing, though in a very brief word. What is true of the beginning of the Christian life, and what is true of growth, is true in the matter of ministry. Now, do not think I am speaking to any particular class of people called "ministers". Ministry, as we have said here before, is a matter of spiritual helpfulness. Any ministry which is not a matter of spiritual helpfulness is not true ministry, and anybody who is spiritually helpful is a minister of Christ. So we are all in the ministry, in God’s plan. Now, since that is so, we are all affected, we are all governed by this same law. To be spiritually helpful is a matter of seeing. You know that 2 Corinthians is the letter in the New Testament which has most to do with ministry. "Seeing we have this ministry" (4:1) - and what is this ministry? Well, "God hath shined into our hearts" (4:6). It is very familiar to us that Paul has at the back of his mind as he writes this part of the letter, Moses, the minister of God. That is the designation by which we know Moses, as the servant of God, and Paul is referring to Moses fulfilling his ministry, his service, reading the law and having to put a veil upon his face because of the glory, the people being unable to look upon him. And that was a glory that was passing. Now, says Paul, in the ministry committed to us God hath shined inside and we have no need of a veil; in Christ the veil is taken away; and what you are to see is Christ in us, and Christ is to be ministered through us as He is seen, as we are the vehicles of bringing Christ into view. That is spiritual helpfulness, that is ministry, namely, bringing Christ into view, and "we have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay, that the exceeding greatness

of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves" (4:7). "We are...": and then follows a whole list of things which put us at a discount. But he is saying, in effect, It is Christ! If we are put at a discount, if we are persecuted, pursued, cast down, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that is only God's way of bringing Christ into view. If we are pursued and persecuted and cast down and the grace of the Lord Jesus is sufficient, and you see the grace of the Lord Jesus being exhibited in that suffering and trial, then you say, that is a wonderful Christ! You see Christ, and by our sufferings Christ is ministered. That is spiritual helpfulness.

Who has helped you most? I know who has helped me most. It has not been anyone in the pulpit. It was one who passed through intense and terrible suffering for many years, and in whom the grace of God was sufficient. I was able to say, If I go through suffering like that, then mine will be a Christianity worth having, mine will be a Christ worth having. That helped me most, that is what I want to see. Do not preach to me; live, and you help me most. It is an inspiration, surely, or should be to us, to see that it is in our trial and adversity that others may see the Lord and be most helped. How we go through trial is the thing that is going to help someone else better than all that we can say to them. Oh, the Lord cover us as we say a thing like that, for we know our frailty, how we fail Him under trial. But that is what Paul is saying here about ministry. "We have this treasure in vessels of fragile clay... we are persecuted, pursued, cast down, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." But, with Paul, the end of all such things was, "they glorified God in me" (Gal. 1:24). What do you want more than that? That is ministry. If you and I could say that at any time, well, we should not have lived in vain. We should have been of some help if it could be said, "They glorified God in me."

But it is seeing; we, to be spiritually helpful, have to see, that others may have the ground provided for seeing. I put it that way; because we may see, and we may give out what we see, we may be living epistles, but others may not be seeing. But there is the ground for their seeing, and if they are honest in heart and unprejudiced, really open to the Lord, He will give them to see what it is the Lord has revealed to us and in us, and is seeking to reveal of Himself through us. He must have living epistles, men and women in whom He can be read. That is ministry.

Well, ministry to be given and to be received, is all a matter of this Divine work of grace of opening eyes. I think we can leave it there, and it all constitutes one

great appeal to our hearts to seek the Lord to have our eyes opened. It is never too late to get spiritual sight, however blind we may have been, and for however long, if we really mean business with the Lord. But do not forget that this is a matter of being honest with God. The Lord Jesus said a wonderful thing to Nathanael. Nathanael was perilously near that double blindness. At the moment when he allowed himself to give expression to a popular prejudice, he was very near the danger zone. He said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" That is a popular prejudice. A popular prejudice has robbed many a man and woman of knowing God’s fuller thoughts. Prejudices may take many forms. Let us be careful. But Nathanael was saved. The Lord Jesus said, "Hereafter ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1:51). "Hereafter..." - He meant, of course, in the day of the Spirit. "As by the Lord the Spirit", Nathanael would see. Well, he was in danger, but he escaped. If you are in danger through your prejudice, beware; forsake your prejudice, be open-hearted. Be an Israelite in whom there is no Jacob, no guile, open-hearted to the Lord, and you will see.

Chapter 3 - Seeing the Lord and Seeing Ourselves

Reading: 2 Chron. 26:1-5, 16-21, 23; Isa. 6:1-10.

This is a very impressive and striking story, and it circles round the matter which has been brought before us at this time, namely, that of spiritual sight. "I saw the Lord"; "mine eyes have seen..."; and everything gathers around that.

What arises from the whole incident is this, that king Uzziah was spiritually and morally a representation of Israel, and of Israel's prophets to a large extent. That is the significance of the double statement by Isaiah the prophet - I am a man of unclean lips, and I am your prophet; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. And that, as is very clear, connects with Uzziah; for you know that a leper had to put a cloth upon his upper lip and go about crying, Unclean! The significance of the words: "I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips" is just that: we are all lepers. Isaiah is saying, in effect, What was true of Uzziah is true of us all, prophet and people. You do not realise it, and I did not realise it until I saw the Lord. We were all terribly, deeply, impressed with what happened in the case of Uzziah: we have been living in an atmosphere charged with the awfulness of that thing, we have been speaking under our breath about it, saying what a terrible thing it was, what an evil thing Uzziah did, and how awful that our king should turn out to be like that, and have an end like that, what a horrible thing leprosy is; and we have been speaking hard things about Uzziah and thinking many thoughts, how grievous his case was, but I have come to see that we are all in the same case. I, who have been preaching to you (do not forget that five chapters of prophecy have preceded this sixth chapter of Isaiah, this is not the commencement of a preacher's life, but somewhere in his life when he wakes up by a new revelation), I who have been preaching and prophesying, I have come to see that I am no better than Uzziah. You people, going on with your round of religious rites and ceremonies, you, attending the temple, you, offering the sacrifices, you, using your lips in worship, you are in the same case as Uzziah: we are all lepers. You may not realise it, but I have come to see. And how have I come to see? I have seen the Lord! "Mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts." "I saw

the Lord... high and lifted up." I say this is very impressive when you think about it.

Well, what are we going to make of it? Perhaps we would do well just to steal away and be quiet with that a little while, just think it out.

Let us dismiss one thing immediately. It is a popular idea which somehow has sprung up, and by which most of us have been caught, that it was this vision that made Isaiah a prophet or preacher. We have heard that, perhaps we have said that. Oh no! Why, if the Book is inspired and governed by God, should it come long after he had been prophesying so much? Look at those five chapters of prophecies. What tremendous things are in those chapters. No, it was not this that was making him the prophet, the preacher. God was dealing with a man, not a prophet; God was dealing with a people, not with an office. He is getting down to what we are in His own sight. So we cannot just transfer it to a class of people called prophets or preachers, and feel that some of us are not involved because we are not in that class, we are just ordinary simple folk who do not aspire to be prophets and preachers. It is not that. The Lord is getting down to people here and seeking to make clear to them how He views them in themselves, even though they may have been preaching a lot; what they are, after all, in His sight, in themselves. Sooner or later that reality has to break upon us to safeguard everything and to secure His end.

What God is Seeking

What is God after? If you can *see*, if you have your eyes opened to see what God is after, then you will understand His method, and why He employs this method. Chapter 5 makes clear what God is after; He is after a people who satisfy His own heart. It is called a remnant. It is called that simply because such a people will be but a remnant. He knows quite well that the whole people will not conform to His thought. He has foreseen that history of His people right up to the days of the coming of His Son, and what this very people will do with His Son. He knows their hearts. That is why He tells Isaiah those terrible things that he is to do: make this people’s heart fat, close their ears and their eyes. He knows.

But nevertheless, there will be those who will respond. They will be but a remnant, and that remnant is mentioned specifically at the end of Chapter 6 in these words - "And if there be yet a tenth in it, it also shall in turn be eaten up: as

a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled; so the holy seed is the stock thereof."

In the stock that has been felled - and you notice what precedes is the felling of the tree; Israel would be felled by the nations whom God is going to call to cut down Israel, to use as His instruments of judgment, and they would fell this tree of Israel, but the stock will remain - and in the stock, there will be a tenth, there will be a remnant, a holy seed in the stock when the whole tree has been dealt with. God is after a company, even out from the whole general company of His people, who will satisfy His heart, and to secure that remnant He lays hold of Isaiah and deals with him in this way, and gives him this vision. Beloved, in order that God should get His end, we have to be thoroughly disillusioned and have our eyes opened to see very clearly what we are in ourselves in the sight of God. Terrible revelation! Anything which is a suspicion or a suggestion of self-satisfaction, self-complacency, of having attained or being satisfied with our present condition, will disqualify from being in the remnant or in any way instrumental toward God’s end, God’s purpose.

So, after this man had set out to speak of the wide ranges of the sovereign judgments of God in the first five chapters of Isaiah, suddenly it seems God arrests him. There is a crisis in his own life and in his own ministry. God takes him to the depths of an eye-opening as to what he is, and what the people are, in His sight. He and they who had judged and condemned, and spoken those words with bated breath about the terrible thing that had happened to Uzziah, were shown to be just as bad; there was no difference. In God’s sight, they were all with the cloth upon their upper lips, called upon to cry, Unclean, unclean!

The Leprosy of the Self-Life

And what was this leprosy? Oh, we say, of course, sin. Yes, sin; but what is this? Let us have a look at Uzziah and see what leprosy meant, what leprosy represented or betokened in the case of Uzziah. "He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, according to all that his father Amaziah had done", and while he walked in the ways of the Lord, the Lord made him to prosper. A man blessed of the Lord, walking in the light of the Lord and knowing the Lord’s favour, and, alongside, that deeply rooted thing which is in every man’s heart, always ready to rise up and turn the very blessings of God to his own account, to make a name for himself, to get a position for himself, to bring himself aggrandisement and glory and power and influence and satisfaction, to give him

a reputation and a position. That is it. What is leprosy? What is this thing which is an abomination to God? It is just that self-life which is in us all, which is ever even coming into the things of God and seeking to make them of personal advantage and account. The Lord blesses, and we become somebody in our own secret hearts because the Lord has blessed. We forget that the very blessings that have come to us have come through grace and the mercy of God, and secretly we begin to think there must be something in us to account for it. It is our ability, our cleverness, something in ourselves. We begin to speak about our blessing, our successes. Oh, it is that thing down there, the leprous germ in us all, the self-life in its manifold ways which produces pride, even spiritual pride, and causes us, like Uzziah, to press in to holy things in self-energy, self-strength, self-assertion, self-sufficiency. Yes, the leprosy is the root of self, selfhood, however it may express itself.

Therein - and it is another branch of things for which we have no time now - therein lies the peril of blessing and prosperity. Oh, how necessary it is for us to be crucified in the midst of our blessings! How necessary it is for God to make safe His blessing of us by continually showing us ourselves, and that it is all of grace, and that if He has given us any kind of blessing, any kind of success, any kind of prosperity at all, it is not because there is something in us in His sight, whatever men may think. Whatever we may be amongst men, in God’s sight we are no better than lepers, and what matters is not how we get on amongst men, but how we get on with God. We might arrive at some very high eminence in this world, but whether we arrive with God or not is the thing that matters.

Now perhaps this goes past most of us, because we are not all too conscious of having been blessed and prospered and having much to boast about. Most of us know the opposite, a good deal of emptying and humiliating. But let us get to the heart of this thing. Even down there in the depths there is a craving in us which is a self-craving, there is a revolt which is the revolt of this self-life.

Well, Uzziah is brought to light here in order to show that that is the thing in people and prophet which makes it impossible for God to reach His end; and it has to be dealt with, exposed; it cannot be overlooked; it must be dragged out, and we must see.

The Attainment of God’s Object - The Fruit of Seeing the Lord

And so I just come at once and directly to this point, which is that God should

get the end upon which His heart is set, a people, though it be but a tenth, a remnant, a people answering to His own heart-desire and satisfying Him in the full purpose of His will. For Him to get that, there must be a seeing, and one thing to be seen, which will do all the rest, is the Lord; and to see the Lord, as this makes so clear, is to see holiness; and when we see holiness we see leprosy where we never suspected it, in ourselves or in others. When we have seen the Lord, we see the true state of things in ourselves and in those around us, even of the Lord's people. To see the Lord is the need, in order that we should be in the way of that end toward which He is pressing.

"I saw the Lord"; "mine eyes have seen". What is the result? Well, it is revealing of ourselves to ourselves, and it is a revealing of the spiritual state around us. When we have seen the Lord, we cry, I am undone! If you look at that word "undone", you will find that it just means this (but this it does mean), I am worthy of death. That is exactly the meaning of the Hebrew word there - worthy of death, I am worthy of death! You and I will see the need for union with Christ in death if our eyes are open to see the Lord; to see that there is nothing else for it, it is the only way.

Now, this is not just language, these are not just words and ideas. What I want us to see is this, for one thing, that the work of the Spirit of God in us, by which our eyes are opened to see the Lord, will result in our feeling that the only thing for us is to die, the best thing for us is to die, to come to an end. Have you got there? Of course, Satan will play on that ground, as indeed he has with many people, trying to drive them to make an end of everything, to work upon something that the Spirit of God is doing and turn it to his own account and create a tragedy. Let us keep in the spiritual realm, and recognise that the Lord will work in us for His own glory and for glorious possibilities, by bringing us to the place where we feel deeply and terribly that the best thing for us is to die. Then He has got us in agreement with His own mind about us. I am undone! - and the Lord might well have said, And so you are: I have known it all the time, I have had difficulty in making you know it; you are undone.

Well now, when you come to that place, you have come to the place where we can start. While we are there, pressing in all the time, occupying the place like Uzziah, coming into the temple, into the house, into the sanctuary; busy, active; we in ourselves, what we are; while we are filling the temple, the Lord is not able to do anything. He says, Look here, you will have to go out, and you will have to come to the place where you hasten of your own accord to go out

because you see you are a leper. That is put in there about Uzziah. "Yea, himself also hasted to go out". At last he realises that this is no place for him. When the Lord has got us to that place - I am undone, this is no place for me! - then He can start on the positive side, He has the way open. This seeing is a terrible thing, and yet it is a very necessary thing, and in the outcome it is a very glorious thing. The commission came then.

Now I am just harrassed for want of time; there are so many things I want to say.

The Reason for the Necessary Experience

I will just add this one thing. Do you see how necessary it was that a thing like that should happen with Isaiah? What was he going to do? Was he going to preach a great revival? Was he going out to tell the people, Everything is all right, the Lord is going to do great things: cheer up, there is a great day just about to dawn? No! Go, make this people's heart fat, close their ears, shut their eyes! This is not a very joyful kind of work. What does it amount to? Well you see, the Lord knew the state of the people's hearts. He knows quite well that they do not want to see in reality. In reality they do not want to see. If they wanted to see, oh, they would be taking different attitudes altogether. They would be free of all prejudices, all suspicions, all criticisms; they would be reaching out and inquiring; they would be showing their signs of hunger and longing; they would be investigating, and they would not be readily put off by other peoples' judgments and criticisms. But He knew that in their heart they did not want to see, they really did not want to hear, whatever they might say about it; and this prophet will say later on, "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa. 53:1). The Lord knew, and judgment always comes along the line of a people's heart. If you do not want, you will lose the capacity for wanting. If you do not want to see, you will lose the capacity for seeing. If you do not want to hear, you will lose the capacity for hearing. *Judgment is organic, it is not mechanical.* It comes along the line of our life. You sow a seed of inclination or disinclination and you will reap a harvest of inability, and one effect of a ministry of revelation is to draw out the people's inclination or disinclination unto their own judgment, and you will find that a ministry of revelation and life only makes some people harder. The Lord knows it is there.

Now, to go on with a ministry like that is not a very comfortable thing. You have to be a crucified man to do that, you have to have no personal interest. If you are out for a reputation, for popularity, for success, for a following, then it is best not

to go this way, not to see too much, best not to have insight into things; better put blinkers on and be an incorrigible optimist. If you are going the way of the Lord's purpose, of a people who really do answer to His thought, it is going to be a way which is cut clean through the mass who will not have it, and who let you know they will not have it, and you go a lonely way. They may think they have a case, but the fact is that they are not hungry and desperate enough even to investigate, to inquire at first hand. They are easily turned aside by the slightest criticism of you, or of your position, of your ministry, and you have to go on with the few, the handful who are going on. It is the price of vision, the price of seeing. Isaiah had to be a crucified man in order to fulfil a ministry like that, and in order for you and me to occupy a position with God, we have to be crucified to that which was in Uzziah, a craving for position. Not satisfied with kingship, he must have priesthood. Nay, more than that, not satisfied with the blessing of God, he must have the very place of God. What a contrast is this! - on the one hand, king Uzziah; on the other, "mine eyes have seen *the* King."

Can you follow this? It is searching, it is tremendous, but oh, beloved, it is the way of the full desire and thought of the Lord. It is a lonely and costly way, and the effect is really to bring out what God sees in the heart of His people, and in order to do that - which is going to mean that we suffer for our revelation, for our vision, for seeing; we have to pay a great price for it - in order to do that, we have to be well crucified, to come to the place where we say, Well, I am undone, I am deserving of death; there is nothing for it but that I should pass out! The Lord says, That is all right, that is what I want - for you to pass out; I wanted Uzziah to pass out: then I could fill the temple! Uzziah is self, it is man as he is, and God does not co-occupy His house with man, He must fill it.

Chapter 4 - The Man Who Receives Spiritual Sight

Reading: Acts 8:26-40.

In this simple but instructive incident we have three parties. We have the Ethiopian, the Holy Spirit, and the human instrument, Philip. The incident falls into the compass of our present meditation in this Conference concerning spiritual sight.

The Ethiopian
(a) A Confessedly Blind Seeker

When we look at this Ethiopian, we at once see a blind seeker. Though religious, though moving in the circle of long standing and well-established religious tradition, though having been to Jerusalem, to the temple, to the very headquarters, he is still blind, still a blind seeker. That is quite clear from the questions he put to Philip about the Scriptures of those with whom he was associated, and their prophets. "How can I understand, except some one shall guide me?" "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? Of himself, or of some other?" He is manifestly a man in the dark, a man without spiritual sight, the eyes of his heart have not been enlightened; but the hopeful thing about him is that he is a confessedly blind man.

(b) A Humble Seeker

He was a very important man in this world, a man of considerable responsibility and influence and standing, and because of his position he might well have hedged things a bit. When challenged about his reading, he might have evaded the point or pointedness of the question and have given some kind of evasive non-committal answer. You know how people do who do not like to be thought ignorant, especially if they are people who are regarded as being of some standing, who have a position to keep up. This man, with all that he was amongst men on this earth, was a confessedly blind man. Without any hedging or evasion, he answers the question quite directly and honestly and frankly. ‘Do I understand what I am reading? Well, how can I except someone teach me?’ Then, in his

openness, he pressed further for information, for explanation, for enlightenment. "Of whom speaketh the prophet?"

Now, that is very simple, I know, but it is fundamental. It is fundamental to any kind of spiritual understanding, it is basic to all spiritual knowledge, it governs every degree of progress in spiritual things. The humility of this great man is the key to the whole story. He does not seek to give the impression that he knows what he does not know, to lead another to think that he understands when he does not understand; he starts right from the place where he truly and really was. He knew in his own heart that he did not understand and he gave no other impression, but let it be known that was exactly where he was, and that gave a fully opened way to the Lord. May it not be it was this that the Lord had seen long before and upon which He was acting all the time? He knew that He had a perfectly honest and humble man in the dark seeking light, and He could move sovereignly in wonderful ways over considerable distances and take some momentous steps; for these were momentous steps that were taken by the Lord in order to meet that life. You see what such a state of heart makes possible from the Lord's side, how much the Lord is prepared to do when He finds a heart like that. A blind man seeking light, but confessedly blind, and so it is not long before he is an enlightened seeker: for the Lord did not leave such a man in the dark; He gave him the light he was seeking.

And may we not say the Lord gave him a great deal more than he was seeking; for I do not think we should be adding anything to the story if we said that, when he went on his way rejoicing, he felt that he had got a great deal more than he had set out to get. It is always like that. When the Lord does a thing, He does it properly. As Mr. Spurgeon said, My cup runneth over, and my saucer also! When the Lord does a thing, He does it well. The man went on with a full and overflowing cup, an enlightened seeker. He had come to see what all the religious leaders of his day were not seeking, and were incapable of showing him.

(c) A Seeker Who Meant Business with God

But the enlightenment that came to him brought with it a fresh challenge, as it always does. Every bit of new light coming from the Lord carries with it a fresh challenge, a challenge to some practical obedience. Now I am not going to stay to deal with a most interesting, and, I think, a most profitable detail of the whole story, but let us note it. Isaiah 53 brought Christ into view and Philip preached

from that scripture Jesus, and the very next thing we strike right up against is, "Here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Now, you have to do some filling in there, if you are to see how that arises with Isaiah 53. I leave you with that. Do not pass it over: you think about it. All I am going to say is that the revelation which came to the man then, the enlightenment of his eyes, brought with it a challenge to obedience, and this enlightened seeker was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision, but was swift to meet the challenge, quick to run in the way of His command, unhesitant in obedience to the light that had come. So far as the thing itself is concerned, all is very simple; but that is the substance of things. We see a man passing from darkness to light. We see a man passing from a quest to a heart-ravishing knowledge. We see a man fumbling, changed into a man who has a firm grasp, a man whose heart is disappointed changed into one who goes on his way rejoicing, and the two things which from his side make that possible are an utter humility, in that he makes no bones at all about his ignorance and does not feign to know more than he does know, and his swift obedience to light coming to him. You have to say about this man, Here is an honest heart.

And that is how God deals with honest people. They get light and they get joy.

Before we leave him, let us say of him that he is clearly a man who means business. I like this man in his intentness upon knowing and doing. He is right on the mark. All the enervating effect of his Ethiopian climate had not robbed him of spiritual energy. He rose above that, he meant business with God. No element of compromise, excuse, or anything like that at all is found in him. He was simply set upon knowing, if it could be known, and doing whatever there was to be done when enlightened.

Well, to the man who is bent on thus knowing and coming into things, God is going to show Himself of the same kind. God is to us what we are to Him. God will be debtor to no man, and if you and I really mean business with God and are going right out for all that God has for us, all that God wants us to have and to know, and are not going to take on any airs but get right down to the level where we really and genuinely are, in all humility, and we mean that whatever the Lord shows us we are going to do it by His grace without any hesitation, we shall find that, in the long run, God is not going to be our debtor, but He will meet us to the full. This man’s story is given immortal record. It comes in the Acts of the Holy Ghost, and when you come to ask the question, Why is this man included in the record and his story handed down from age to age to last as long as time? The

answer is just what we have said: he was a man who meant business with God, was open to the Lord, honest in heart, humble in spirit, and obedient to the light that he had.

The Holy Spirit
(a) The Ground He Requires

Well, then, the second party in the story is the Holy Spirit, and a brief word only needs to be said. Of course, in reality He was the first party in the whole business, but I mention Him second here because it is perhaps more helpful to examine the incident in this order. The Holy Spirit was aware of such a man, and the Holy Spirit is always aware of such a man. There is a sense in which an Ethiopian must go before the Holy Spirit. You understand what I mean by that. Before the Holy Spirit can really do His work, He must have something upon which to do it that meets His requirements, and the Holy Spirit was cognizant of this man, of his quest and of his heart, and the Holy Spirit is always aware of such people as to where they are.

(b) How He is Hindered

I think there is a very big story hanging upon a statement like that. If we did but know it, a lot of our problems are solved by understanding that. There is the big question which is always confronting us as to why is it that some leap into the light and go on, and others do not, but always lag behind, and never seem to see any more? Is it that there is a selectiveness on the part of God, a kind of elect of the elect that He has, is it that He has favourites? I do not think so. I think a great part of the answer lies here, namely, in what God finds He has to deal with, whether people mean business with Him or not, whether He has a clear way or not, whether the ground is occupied or not already by that which is an obstruction to Him. I do not think anybody will fail to get all the light the Lord wants them to have if they really do mean business with God. The Holy Spirit knows us. He looks right deep down into our hearts and knows whether we mean business. He sees exactly what there is to hinder Him and how far He can go; for the Lord is not going to coerce anyone. If we are taken up with ourselves, occupied with ourselves, circling round ourselves, centering in ourselves, then the Holy Spirit has not a chance. We have to come to an end of ourselves. That is the trouble with so many. They have got a self-complex set up, and all the time it is a continuous going round in a circle and coming back to the same point at which they started, and it is all round themselves, and they are wearing

themselves out. Before long they are going to have an awful crash that involves all that for which they are supposed to stand and represent for the Lord, and it will come down with them. The Holy Spirit has not a clear way. We have to get out of the way, so far as this self-occupation is concerned, if we are going to move straight on, and to go on. He knows exactly where we are, whether we are tied up in them that we are not open to the Lord to consider any further light at all. We have got it all, or our people with whom we are associated have got it all, and we are a part of that! You know what I mean. The Holy Spirit cannot do much with folk who are in a position like that; and He knows. His attitude is, It is no use, I cannot do much there, they are too tied up. But, if we are prepared to put everything into the water, then the Lord can go on and get a clear way.

The Holy Spirit knows. He knows you and He knows me. He knows us a great deal better than we know ourselves. We may have thought that we meant business and have been praying very much a long time and crying to the Lord to do something, while the Holy Spirit knows quite well that we are not at an end of ourselves and our own interests yet. Something more has to be done to bring us to despair before He can do what He wants. But He knows: that is the point; and He knew this man, that He had not got a great deal to do to make a start with every prospect of a clear way, and He took the opportunity presented, and He was able to act sovereignly. He did that in order to meet this need.

The Human Instrument

Now I do not want to take very much time, so I pass to the third of the three, the human instrument, Philip, the means by which, on the one hand, the blind seeker would have his eyes opened, and by which, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit will be able to accomplish His work. We all want to be in that position where really honest, genuine, business-meaning men and women can find what they are after through our instrumentality if God so will, and, on the other hand, where the Holy Spirit can find in us a vessel to hand where He sees such a need. Surely there is nothing we would desire more than that, just to be as Philip was.

But even in Philip’s case, it was not that he was an automatic bit of machinery, something taken up willy-nilly. There were things about Philip which constituted the ground for the Lord; very, very simple matters, and yet not such as are so easy in practical life and outworking.

Philip was at the disposal of the Holy Spirit, and that without any question, and

when you look, you see that that meant something in his case. Philip was down there in Samaria. Many were turning to the Lord, a great work of grace was going on, so great a work that they had to send down apostles from Jerusalem to deal with the situation; and Philip was the chief instrument in that work in the first place. Now when you are right in the thing like that, and the Lord suddenly says, "Now, Philip, I want you to leave all this and go down by the way that is desert; I will not tell you why, I will not tell you what I am going to do, I simply say, go to the desert", a man might have big questions. He might have said, But Lord, what about this? But, Lord, look at this big door of opportunity, look what I am doing, what I am in! What will happen here if I leave it? Many questions like that might have arisen. He could have had serious reservations and put them in the way of the Lord. But we do not read of anything like that. The Lord simply said it, and Philip was so much at the disposal of the Lord that, without any questions, he moved. What a tremendous thing it is to be free for the Lord, free to the Lord, to be so much at the Lord's disposal that it is not difficult at all to leave anything, to adjust ourselves to an altogether new situation, if the Lord says it. It is a great thing. So Philip was at the Lord's disposal, and that is a big factor in a work like this of bringing sight to blind seekers, and being, not only the answer to man's need, but the answer to the need of the Holy Spirit; at the Lord's disposal and unhesitating in response to the Lord's suggestion; no delay, but a swift answer. "The Lord has said it, let us get on with it and leave the responsibility with Him."

It turned out all right, it was quite a safe thing to do. Now, the Lord never does explain Himself in advance. The Lord never does tell us ahead how it is going to work out and what He is going to do. He always presents us with a challenge to faith in Him. All His requirements carry with them plenty of opportunities for arguing if you are so disposed; plenty of occasions, humanly speaking, of question. The one who knows the Spirit knows well that the vindication will come along the line of swift obedience.

Well now, that is the story; simple, beautiful, but containing vital principles of enlightenment. If you want to see people go on, these are the things which the Lord requires. If you want to go on, these are the things which lie behind all real going on, all leaping into light, into knowledge, in the greater fulness of the Lord.

Well, look again at this man. It is a great story. You know that the Bible holds up Ethiopia as a type of darkness: but here is the darkness changed to the light, the

full blaze of the noonday; for Christ is that: and that is the basis on which it is done, namely, a heart that is frank, humble, purposeful, and honest in its search.

I do not know what the Lord may be saying to you, but for us all the pivot of the whole matter is, Here is water! I am not saying that baptism is the pivot, but I am saying that it is represented by baptism. Are we ready for everything to go into the grave? Have we something we are holding on to; our position, our reputation, our status and all that, or is it all going into the grave? The Lord here has a man who does not say, "Is it necessary for me to be baptized; must I? Of course, if the Lord requires it, I will seek grace;" but a man who says, "Here it is, what doth hinder?" That is another angle altogether. Tell me anything that hinders and I will deal with it! Get that kind of spirit. ‘If you can show me anything that hinders my going on in the way that the Lord indicates, then I will deal with it. What does He want, Philip? Can you tell me of any hindrance?’ Philip found no hindrance, but everything to help. Both went down together and Philip baptized him. The Lord just put into our hearts the meaning of that and give us to be good Ethiopians in this spiritual sense.

Chapter 5 - The Cause and Ground of Blindness

Reading: 2 Cor. 3:17-18; 4:1-6.

We have been led in this Conference to be concerned with the matter of spiritual sight. Here in the scripture which we have read we have another portion touching upon this very matter of blindness and seeing.

First, there is the fact of the blindness - "the god of this age hath blinded": then there is the cause - "the god of this age"; and then there is the reason or object, namely; "that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them." We will look at it, then, in that order.

The Fact of Blindness

You will notice that a parallel is drawn between Israel in the days of Moses and the unbelieving in the days of Paul. In both cases it is said that there is a veil over their hearts, over their minds, a veil which shuts out, which excludes, and which is in the nature of a darkening blindness. Moreover there is an element of judgment and condemnation in the way in which the apostle speaks of it. Even with regard to Israel gathered to the door of the tent of meeting, when Moses read the law, he says, in effect, that while Moses had to put a veil over his face because they could not bear to look upon the glory of his face, that was not really because the glory could not be beheld, but because of the state of their mind, of their heart, because of an inward condition in themselves. Had there been another inward state, the veil would have been unnecessary; they could have beheld the glory and dwelt in the light. But the veil was an outward representation of an inward condition, hiding the glory of God. It was never the Lord’s desire to hide His glory, but rather to manifest it, and that man should dwell in it, should enjoy it, that there should be no veil between God and man at all. Veils have always been as something between God and man because of a condition which God would rather not have.

The Blinding Power of Unbelief

Thus it must stand as a thing under condemnation and judgment, this darkness, this blindness, this hiding, this shutting out of the glory of God, and that inward condition in the case of Israel in the time of Moses, and of those in like condition in the days of Paul, and in the case of all in such a position, that inward condition which acts like a veil is, as we know so well from all that is said about Israel, incorrigible unbelief. It was Israel's incorrigible unbelief which blinded them. But to say that is not to be altogether helpful. It is a statement of a fact, a very oppressive fact. We know our own hearts sufficiently well to know that there is an incorrigible unbelief in us all, and we want to understand why that unbelief is there, and what the nature of it is, so as to discover how the veil can be removed; that is, how the unbelief can be dealt with so that we behold the glory of the Lord and dwell in the eternal light.

Light on Resurrection Ground

Well then, let us look again to see what the Lord was ever and always seeking to do in the case of Israel. We can put it this way: He was always trying to get them in heart, in spirit, in life, to occupy resurrection ground. That is first made evident in the Passover in Egypt, when the firstborn in every home in Egypt was slain on that terrible night when death was everywhere. But Israel was not, as is too superficially supposed, exempt. The casual, superficial idea is that the firstborn in Israel were not slain, only the firstborn in Egypt. But the firstborn in all Israel were slain. The difference was that the firstborn in Egypt were slain actually, and the firstborn in Israel substitutionarily. When that lamb was slain in every Israelitish home, for every household, that lamb representatively passed under the same judgment as the firstborn in all Egypt, and in that lamb Israel passed representatively from death into life. In that lamb Israel was virtually brought through death on to resurrection ground. For Egypt there was no resurrection ground; for Israel there was. That is the difference. But all died, the one actually, the other representatively. Thus God, right at the very foundation of Israel's national life, sought to get them established upon the ground of resurrection, which means that a death has taken place, an end has been brought about. One whole order of things has been wound up and another entirely different order of things has been brought in, and to get them to take their position upon that new ground, in that new order, was God's great effort and meaning in the Passover. The keeping of the Passover year by year as an established ordinance throughout all their generations and their history was God's way of showing that they belonged to another order, the order of the resurrection. While darkness was in every house of the Egyptians and over all

the land of Egypt, the children of Israel had light in their dwellings; for light is always on resurrection ground, but only on resurrection ground.

Then at the Red Sea the same great principle was repeated, passing through and out on to resurrection ground; Egypt again swallowed up, but Israel saved. They all went into the same sea, but for Israel on the other side there is a pillar of fire to be their light on resurrection ground - the Spirit of light and of life. They kept the Passover as they went on year by year under God’s order, in order to preserve the testimony as to the ground upon which they stood nationally.

Then came the Jordan; and it is but a reiteration in principle of the same thing, now made necessary, not by their naked condition, but by their recognition of it. It is doubtful whether in Egypt and at the Red Sea Israel had the subjective understanding of the meaning of what God was doing in the Passover and in the Red Sea, but now they have the subjective consciousness of its being a necessity. They have been discovering things for forty years and they agree at last; they agree with God that another ground altogether is necessary if they are to abide in the light. You see, God was persistently by every means seeking to get Israel to occupy and remain upon resurrection ground, from which there had been cut off entirely all the ground of nature. Their incorrigible unbelief had as its main constituent the clinging to unresurrection ground or ground of nature.

The Consequence of Living on the Ground of Nature

What is the ground of nature? Well, look at Israel and you can see quite clearly what the ground of nature is. The ground of nature is always a drawing of things toward oneself and a viewing of everything in the light of oneself, just how it affects self. You see right at the beginning it was that. Yes, of course, the deliverance at the beginning affected us rather well, and so we were very happy. The mighty deliverance at the Red Sea is a good thing for us, so we are full of joy today. It will always be like that while things are good for us. But let us find that we are being tested at all, bring us tomorrow to this place and that, where it is not so obvious that it is all to our profit, and the song ceases, joy goes out, and murmuring comes in "They murmured." Oh how often it is said that they murmured! Why? Because they occupied carnal ground, natural ground, which in a word, means "how it affects me"! That is natural ground, and on that ground there will always be the uprising of unbelief.

The strength of unbelief is just that very thing, personal natural interests and

considerations, looking at things in the light of our own advantage or disadvantage. Allow that kind of thing to come in for a moment, and it will not be long before you are questioning and doubting, and found in unbelief; for the essence of faith is the very opposite of that. When things are going against you and your interests, and you are losing your life and all that you have, and you believe God, you trust God, that is faith indeed, that is the essence of faith. But faith is not real faith when we believe God merely while the sun shines and all goes well. Israel occupied natural ground so persistently that they were found more in unbelief than in faith. It was that which blinded them. So that blind unbelief, when we come to analyse it, is simply occupying ground that is other than resurrection ground; that is, we are occupying ground which God has put under the curse, which God has forbidden, upon which God has inscribed the warning to believers, Keep off! If only we could see in our hearts those warning notices of God strewn over the whole territory of self-interest, worldly considerations, and so on, we should be saved from very much of the misery which comes into our lives.

Well, you see, the whole life of nature is a blind thing, and the measure in which we are ruled by nature is the measure of our blindness. "The natural man", says the Spirit of God, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned" or "discerned by the spiritual" (1 Cor. 2:14). The whole life of nature is a blind thing. The measure in which we occupy that ground is the measure of our blindness. God was seeking to get Israel off that ground on to resurrection ground, to be governed, not by nature, but by the Spirit: and being governed by the Spirit means to walk in the light, means to have light, means to see.

A Life in the Spirit

"Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). Liberty from what? Why, liberty from the veil. "When it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away"; bondage, limitation, is taken away. And "the Lord is the Spirit". To be on the ground of the Spirit, which is resurrection ground, with the life of nature set aside, is to be delivered from blindness and to be in the light. A life in the Spirit! Israel forever stands to declare with no uncertain note that religion is not necessarily enlightenment, and that even to have the Scriptures is not necessarily enlightenment. "When Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart". "When Moses is read..." Paul said a very strong thing about the Scriptures and the prophets which they read every day; that they know

not what they mean, perceive not what they signify, but are still in blindness, in darkness. No, even to have the Scriptures does not necessarily imply enlightenment.

The message of 2 Corinthians is as much to Christians as it is to unbelievers, if it is not more so, this message about the veil, about blindness, about seeing; for where is the Christian who is fully and finally delivered from the life of nature? Enlightenment, after all, is only a comparative thing, that is, it is a "more or less" matter. Hence all those strong urges and exhortations to believers to walk in the light, to live in the Spirit, for only so can this matter of spiritual seeing and understanding develop and make progress. A life in the Spirit - that is only another way of saying, a life on resurrection ground.

What we have said thus far is that the blindness which is spread over the whole of the life of nature operates and has its strength in the choice and acceptance of that life of nature on the part of those concerned. It is not necessary, it is not God’s will. God’s desire is that we should dwell in the light, that we should see His glory, that there should be no veil at all. That is His desire, that the veil should be taken away. But one great thing is necessary, namely, that we should come to that Passover, to that death which is the death to the life of nature and which brings in a new life altogether, a life of the Spirit, in which a new faculty, a new power, a new capacity for seeing is created. That is a very important thing. I could well spend all the rest of the time available on that, it is so important to us as the Lord’s people.

When will the Lord’s people who have the Scriptures, and who know the Scriptures so well in the letter, when will they come to realise and to recognise that, if truly they have been crucified with Christ, if they have died in His death and have been raised together with Him, and have received the Spirit, they have light in their dwelling? "The anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you, but... His anointing teacheth you concerning all things" (1 John 2:27). When will believers, when will Christians, come to realise that? Why must Christians who have the knowledge of the Scriptures in the letter run about here and there to seek advice from others on matters which vitally affect their own spiritual knowledge? I do not mean that it is wrong to get counsel, wrong to know what other children of God of experience think or feel about matters. But if we are going to build our position upon their conclusions, we are in great danger. The final authority and arbiter in all matters is the Spirit of God, the Spirit of the anointing. We may get help from

one another, but I do hope that you are not going to build your position upon what I say now because I say it. Do not do that. I do not want you to do it, I do not ask you to do it. What I say is, listen, take note, and then go to your final authority Who is in you, if you are a child of God, and ask Him to corroborate the truth or to show otherwise. That is your right, your birthright, the birthright of every child of God, to be in the light of the indwelling Spirit of light, the Spirit of God.

I wonder where Paul would have been had he taken the opposite course to that which he did take? "When it pleased God, who separated me from my birth... to reveal His Son in me... straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before me: but I went away into Arabia" (Gal. 1:15-17). I wonder what would have happened had he gone up to Jerusalem and laid every matter before those who were apostles before him? We know from subsequent events that one thing they would have said to him would have been, Look here, be careful, Paul! You tell us that on the Damascus road Jesus is supposed to have said something to you about going to the Gentiles; be careful! They would have put him back about this Gentile business. You know what happened afterward. You know how on that point even Peter was caught in dissimulation years after. You know how those apostles which were before him at Jerusalem were all the time very chary about this matter of the Gentiles, and had Paul capitulated to them, we should never have had the great apostle to the Gentiles, the great apostle of the Body of Christ, with his revelation of the mystery, of the oneness of all in Christ, Jew and Greek. He did not submit that thing even to those who were apostles before him to ask them whether he was right or not, whether this was sound or not. Oh no! He had the anointing in Damascus; Ananias laid his hands upon him and he received the Spirit, and from that day, although Paul was quite ready and happy to have fellowship with his brethren, though he never took a superior or independent position, though he was always open to conference, nevertheless he was a man governed by the Spirit.

I know you have to be careful how you take what I am saying. It will only be safe for you as you are one who does not set yourself up as some independent party with the Holy Spirit, but who keeps perfect fellowship, humility, submissiveness, openness of heart, with readiness to listen to and obey what may come through others, as the Spirit bears witness to the truth. But all that depends upon your inward condition, whether you are on natural ground or on spiritual ground, on old creation ground or on resurrection ground. But being on

resurrection ground, where it is not the life of nature but the Spirit that governs, beloved, you have the right and the privilege and the blessing of knowing the Spirit bearing witness in your heart and the anointing teaching you all things, with regard to whether any given matter is right or wrong. When will the Lord's people know that, recognise that?

You see, it is this other thing all the time that is robbing so many of the light that the Lord would give them. The Lord would lead them into the greater fulnesses of the knowledge of His Son, of the enlargement of their spiritual understanding, but they are neglecting the gift that is in them. They are neglecting the Holy Spirit as their illuminator and teacher and instructor and guide and arbiter, and they are going to this one and that one, to this authority and that, and saying, What do you think about it? If you think it is wrong, then I will not touch it! It is fatal to spiritual knowledge to do that. That is going on to natural ground.

Now the Lord wants us off of that ground. This matter of occupying resurrection ground, of living a life in the Spirit, is all-important in coming to the full knowledge of God's Son. How much more we could say about that! Let us be careful as to who our authorities are. So many dear children of God, individually and collectively, have come into dire and grievous bondage, limitation and confusion, by all the time going back to human authorities, to this great leader and that, to this man who was greatly used of God, this man who had a great deal of spiritual light. "The Lord has yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word" than even this or that servant of His possessed. Do you see what I mean? We get all the benefit of the light given to godly people and seek to profit by true light, but we will never come into bondage and say, That is the end of that matter! That must never be. We must maintain our resurrection ground. And who can exhaust that? In other words, who can exhaust the meaning of Christ risen? He is a boundless store, the land of far distances. No man yet has ever done more than begun to know the meaning of Christ risen. If there has been one man who has that meaning more than another, I suppose it was Paul. But to the last from his prison he still cries, "That I may know Him!": "I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for Whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse" (Phil. 3:8). Right at the end of a life like his, the life of a man who could say, Fourteen years ago I knew a man in Christ, caught up to the third heaven and shown unspeakable things, which, it is not lawful for a man to utter (2 Cor. 12:2-3), he is still saying, That I may know Him! I say no man, be he Paul, has ever done more than begin to know Christ risen. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into

the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit" (1 Cor. 2:9-10). You see, the Spirit has the unsearchable riches to reveal to us. So much, then, for the blindness which comes by occupying natural ground in whatever form that may take.

The Cause of Blindness

A word or two about the cause. "The god of this age hath blinded." There are two things in that phrase. Firstly, this blindness is not, after all, only natural, it is supernatural. It is not to say everything to say that nature is a blind realm. No, there is something very much more sinister than that about this blindness. It is supernatural blindness, but it is evilly supernatural blindness. It is the work of the Devil. That is why, on the one hand, spiritual sight-giving is always fraught with such terrible conflict. No one ever really does come to see by the Spirit and understand without a fight, without a price having to be paid, without a terrible amount of suffering. Every bit of real spiritual illumination and enlightenment is a costly thing. For it Paul had to be much on his knees where the saints were concerned. "I bow my knees"; I pray "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him" (Eph. 1:17). It is something which has to be prayed through, and it is not without significance that prayer in the letter to the Ephesians comes so much in association with what is revealed in chapter 6: "our wrestling... is against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies. Wherefore take up the whole armour of God" - this and that and that - "...with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:12-18). "This darkness" - "praying always": "I pray that He... may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him". You see, it is all of a piece. The explanation lies here, in "the god of this age". We are up against something supernatural in this spiritual blindness. We are right up against the whole cosmic forces of evil, all those intelligences operating to keep people in blindness.

It is no small thing to have true spiritual sight. It represents a mighty victory. It is not going to come to you by just sitting passively and opening your mouths for it to arrive. There has to be exercise about this matter. You are right up against the full force of the god of this age when you are really out for spiritual understanding. It is a supernatural battle. So every bit of ministry that is going to be a ministry of true revelation will be surrounded by conflict. Conflict will go

before, conflict will go on at the time, and conflict may follow after. It is like that.

Herein, then, is the need for you to be exercised about light, that, while you hear the thing, you shall not take it for granted that, having heard it, you have got it; that you should afterward have very definite dealings with the Lord, that what He is seeking to break through to you shall indeed be entered into, and that you are not going to delude yourself by assuming that you know now merely because you have heard it in its terms. You may not know it. It may not yet be delivering light; there may be a battle necessary in this matter.

If we did but know it, a very great deal of the conflict which arises in our lives is because God is seeking to bring us further on the road, to open our eyes to Himself, to bring us into the light of His Son. God is seeking to broaden our spiritual horizon, and the enemy is out against that, and he is not going to have it if he can help it. Conflict arises. We may not understand it, but very, very often, more often than not, it is just that, namely, that the Lord is after something, and Satan says, They shall not see that if I can help it! So there arises a mighty warfare. This blindness is supernatural, just as enlightenment is supernatural.

"The god of this age"! That designation may mean more than just a period in time. It may mean all of time, because Satan gained kingship over man right at the beginning. That is what he was after, to take the place of God and to get the worth-ship of man’s life; to be god, to be worshipped; which simply means to take what man has of worth to himself. God made man with a view to his being a vehicle of bringing something to God for God’s pleasure and glory, something worthy of God, that God should have a worth-ship out of man, and Satan said: I am going to have that worth-ship; God has something vested in that creation, something He is going to get for Himself; I am going to have it! So the whole of what took place in the Garden was Satan’s way of supplanting God in man’s heart, in man’s mind, and getting from man that which was God’s right - the worship. Thus, by man’s consent and fall, Satan gained godship in this world, and has held it ever since. "This age" just means the course of this world. "The god of this age"!

Now, the greatest peril to Satan’s godship is spiritual illumination. He will not hold that ground long once your eyes are opened. Oh, once a heart is enlightened, Satan’s power is at once broken. So the Lord, consistently with that fact, said to Paul on the Damascus road - "...to whom I send thee, to open their

eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God" (Acts 26:17-18). The two things go together: From darkness to light; from the power of Satan unto God. I repeat that the greatest menace and peril to Satan and his position is spiritual illumination. Hence he must find ground on which to perpetuate and maintain his position, his godship, in this age. And what ground will satisfy him in that matter? The answer is, the ground of nature. You get on to the ground of nature and you have given Satan right of possession. Every time we do that, Satan's hold is strengthened.

The Object of the Blinding Work of Satan

Now just to mention and hint at the third thing. What is the reason or object of this blinding work of Satan? It is that "the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them" (2 Cor. 4:4). The glory of Christ; the gospel of the glory of Christ; the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ; who is the image of God; lest that should dawn upon them, and that it should not dawn upon them, the god of this age hath blinded them.

Then what is the object? We are taken back to some dateless time when in the counsels of the Godhead the Son was appointed heir of all things. He Who was co-equal with God was put in the way of inheriting all things. When that was known in heaven, there was one in the angelic hosts in whose heart iniquity was found. That iniquity was the pride of desiring that equality and aspiring to that inheritance. His heart was lifted up, and he said, "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God... I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:12-14; Eze. 28:11-19), in the saying of which he uncovered his jealousy of God's Son; and out from that iniquity of his heart, that pride, that jealousy of his heart, he lost his place there, and he has come down and pursued his course of animosity all through the ages, that men shall never see the Son if he can help it. That the light of the glory of Christ should not dawn upon them, he has darkened and blinded them. It is to exclude the Son.

That surely signifies something immense where Christ is concerned, if Satan, with all his great intelligence and understanding, recognises that, if men see that Son, it is the greatest thing that ever could happen. Everything of God's intention is bound up with that. All God's great purpose in the creation of this world, and this universe, hangs upon that. It is all vested in the Son, and if men see the Son, then God reaches His end and realises His purpose. Satan says, That must not be, they must not see the Son! The god of this age hath blinded their minds, lest the

light of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God, should dawn upon them.

What a thing it is to see the Son then! I cannot stay now with that immense matter. But let us finish on this note: What a tremendous shout will go up throughout the universe when at last we see Him face to face, when there is no more darkening veil at all in any degree. God has His end then; the Son appears, the Son is seen. When we see Him, "we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him even as He is" (1 John 3:2). That is what God made us for: "fore-ordained to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29). But oh, seeing now and seeing evermore unto the perfect day is necessary, for it is as we behold that we are changed into that image.

What is the prayer upon our lips and in our hearts as we go away? Let it not be mere sentiment, let it be a persistent cry and a persistent quest - We would see Jesus! In the seeing of Him all the purpose of God in this universe is bound up.

Chapter 6 - Seeing the Glory of Christ as Son of God

"God... hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His son, Whom He appointed Heir of all things" (Heb. 1:1-2).

"...the kingdom of His Son... Who is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him, and unto Him; and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Col. 1:13-17).

"...the glory of Christ... we preach... Christ Jesus as Lord" (2 Cor. 4:4-5).

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made through Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:1, 3-4).

"For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth: and greater works than these will He show Him, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son also giveth life to whom He will... For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself: and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is a Son of man" (John 5:20-21, 26-27).

"...the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5).

There are three main directions in which spiritual sight is necessary; firstly, with regard to the place and significance of Christ in the Divine scheme of things; then, with regard to the place and significance of man in that scheme; and thirdly, concerning the reality, ways, and objective of the evil spiritual powers in this universe. These three things very largely comprehend the Scriptures. Here, we shall be mainly occupied with the first of these.

The Place and Significance of Christ

There are two sides to Christ's person and work. (1) Christ as the Son of God. (2) Christ as the Son of Man. When we have gathered up all that is said and intimated in the Scriptures about Jesus as the Son of God we are led to one comprehensive conclusion. It is this, that God's sole rights and prerogatives have been vested by Him in His Son, and God has bound Himself to be personally and definitely known only Son-wise. There is neither access nor knowledge of a personal nature, nor fellowship, apart from the Son. "No man cometh to the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). "No one knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him" (Matt. 11:27). That revelation is in the Son alone. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). Then we have to ask, What are those unique and sole rights of God which are vested in the Son?

The first is:

The Prerogative of Life

When we really come to deal with life, we come to deal with God. While there is something of life present man may have a place. He may help, stimulate, feed, and co-operate with it; but when life has departed, man has no more place and it is God's matter alone. Only God can deal with that situation. The question of life from the dead is God's matter alone. For a whole generation this question raged as a battle, and very largely it raged around one man - Louis Pasteur. During the whole of his life-time the question of spontaneous generation flamed and fumed and divided men into schools of fierce antagonism. But before he died the question was settled and today no knowledgeable person believes otherwise than that life only comes from life, and never from death - that is, in the realm of nature. Thus the field is left clear for the supernatural, and life out of death is God's unique sphere. What is true in the natural is also true in the spiritual. The life which we all have in common as the life of soul and body is one thing, and the above law holds good with regard to it. But there is another life; it is uncreated life, Divine life, what we call spiritual life. That is another thing altogether. A hundred or more people may be here together, all of them alive in the first sense, but only a few may be alive in the second sense. The majority, while very active in the life of soul and body, may be quite dead with regard to uncreated, Divine, life. Thus are people divided, and in this way they are two entirely different orders of creation, species of beings.

Much has been said and written about the IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL. The

Bible does not teach this. Continuity and immortality are two distinct things. Immortality is a Divine prerogative and feature. "Who only hath immortality" (1 Tim. 6:16). Immortality is that Divine nature which is characteristic of Divine life. It is something altogether higher than just survival of physical disintegration and the grave. This latter without immortality or immortal life must be a very horrible thing. It is what the Bible means - metaphorically - by being "naked" and "ashamed". So the apostle speaks of immortality as being "clothed upon", that "mortality may be swallowed up of life."

Thus the giving of that life is with God alone, and those who have it are thereby different in an inward reality from all others. They possess the basis of a complete transformation, which is the meaning of being "glorified".

But our particular message is that God has vested this life in His Son Jesus Christ, and that it cannot be had apart from Him. "As the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself" (John 5:26). "As the Father raiseth the dead and giveth them life, even so the Son giveth life to whom He will" (John 5:21). The gospel of the glory of Christ is that God has given Him the glory of being able to give eternal life, incorruptible, immortal life to those who believe on Him. "This life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath the life" (1 John 5:11-12). Once have that life imparted and all the glorious thoughts and purposes of God for men have been started on their way to realisation. So that what comes in with Christ is the life of a new creation, a new universe. Everything is to be realised on the biological principle, but it is a life which is different in nature, capacity, and consciousness from all other life. Being peculiarly God’s own Divine life it is the basis and link of true inward fellowship with Him. In this way we are able to see something of the immense and vital significance of Christ.

To accept Christ in a living and positive way is to receive a life which means an inward and secret difference in our very constitution, and to be in the way of possibilities which are denied all others.

To reject or neglect Christ is to lose or miss all that God ever intended when He created man and put him on a probation of faith. Herein lies the immense peril of prevarication or procrastination. It is not in man’s power to say when that life shall be offered to him. When Christ is presented, that is the time when life and death are in the balances of our acceptance or rejection, and the very greatest eternal values and issues are bound up with that decision.

To all this the great enemy of men's eternal glory would blind them and keep them blind. One of the blinding lies of the Devil is the lie of evolution. While we all believe in a certain development and progress, the doctrine which declares that man started with the amoeba and in the course of many thousands - perhaps millions - of years passes through numerous stages - e.g. of ape, primitive man, civilised man, angelic being, and so on - and finally becomes a god, having attained deity! - this is a lie and a deception, and is intended by its Satanic inventor to keep men from accepting Christ. For all this progress (?) is said to be made altogether *without any outside* intervention. Someone writing on this matter has put it in this way: We have heard of a wonderful machine which, with claws, takes hold of so much leather at one end and draws it in and, without any outside intervention, takes it through stage after stage, and pours it forth as shoes at the other end: without any outside intervention! And, says the writer, that is evolution; the claws take hold on the amoeba and draw it in, and then evolution is supposed to take it through various stages and at last turn it out as angels and gods. But, says he, unfortunately the amoeba at a certain point gets caught in the mesh and in the end beasts come out, tearing one another to pieces! Are men really nearer angels and gods today after these thousands of years? Is the moral life of the race so much higher after all? Only the very blind will say it is.

Ah, it is just in that little clause "outside intervention" that everything is found. There will never really be any true conformity to God's likeness without outside intervention. It will not work like a machine. This outside intervention is set forth in the words of Christ: "I am come that they might have life" (John 10:10). There is no hope of man reaching God by himself, but God has intervened in the person of His Son and with Him offered the life which has in it the power to bring us into oneness with Him in likeness and fellowship.

God's Prerogative of Light Vested in the Son

The second prerogative of God is light. It was God Who said, Let there be light, light shall be! Light is with God. Of course, there are many intimations in the Scriptures of that in the natural realm. God makes darkness and light, and God, when He chooses, can break into the ordinary course of things in that matter and turn light to darkness or darkness to light. He can divide in the same territory between light and darkness; when all Egypt is in darkness, gross darkness, with the plague resting upon it, the children of Israel have light in their dwellings. Right within the same land, light and darkness simultaneously existed by a Divine intervention from the outside. Yes, light can be preserved and maintained

by God beyond the due course, and darkness can be brought in prematurely when it ought to be light.

There is much in the Old Testament about that, and it is carried over into the New Testament. When the Son of God was crucified, darkness was over the face of the land until the ninth hour. Put out God's Son and you put out God's light. That is the point. Light is God's prerogative.

What is illustrated by God's dealings in nature is the great truth of spiritual light; that spiritual light is God's prerogative, that He can bring light into darkness at any given moment, He does not have to wait for a course of things: and He can shut out the light at any given moment. It is in His power to do that. To turn from darkness to light is a miracle in the spiritual world and an intervention from the outside, and it is equally a Divine intervention of judgment when the light that is in us becomes darkness. That is with God.

Thus this second prerogative of God, namely, that of light, is also vested in Jesus Christ, His Son, and bound up with Him. "I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... In Him was life; and the life was the light of men". "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him", "He hath revealed Him" (John 1:18). It is the glory of Christ to be able, at any given moment, to break in upon our darkness, and has it not just been that which has brought His glory into our hearts and brought glory out from our hearts to Him, when by that blessed touch of His finger (the Spirit of God) we have been able to say suddenly, I see! I never saw it like that! What is then the spontaneous desire of our hearts? It is to worship Him.

We revert to that man born blind, to whom the Lord gave sight and eventually interrogated him with the inquiry, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? "He answered and said, And who is he, Lord, that I may believe on him? Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen Him, and He it is that speaketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him". Why did he worship? Because the Son of God for him was one thing with having his sight. The two things went together. Having his sight was bound up with this One Who could be none other than the Son of God to give sight. That is what the Lord meant by having that incident included in that gospel, the whole purpose of which is to give evidence that Jesus is the Son of God. You know how John concludes his gospel - If everything was written that could be written, I suppose that even the world itself

would not contain the books that should be written; but these things are written, "that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name" (John 20:30). And this is written in the book which has that as its object. When the disciples say, Lord, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he should be born blind?, the Lord Jesus dismissed that superstition by saying, "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him". And the Son is the instrument of the works of God. The Lord Jesus had already said that the Father works, and the works that the Father does, the Son also does, and greater works than these will He show Him. The works of God - giving sight, through the Son, to those born blind, leading to worship; and God does not mind you worshipping His Son, He will not be jealous of His Son, because He has bound Himself up with His Son and put His Son on an equality with Himself, and vested His own rights and prerogatives in His Son. To worship the Son is to worship the Father, because the Father and the Son are one.

Well, that Jesus is the Son of God is evidenced by people getting spiritual sight, and that is the glory of Christ, to be able to do that, leading, as we were saying, to worship. It is a great thing to recognise even a little of this. It is a great thing to have our eyes opened. It is a great thing to have our eyes opened initially and foundationally; it is a great thing as we go along to have our eyes opened again and again to see what no one has been able to show us, what we have struggled to see and understand; and then God sovereignly, by intervention from outside, touches our spiritual eyes and we see. Is it not a great day when we see like that?

Some of us know what it is to have something in the Word of God. We sense there is something in that passage that we have not got; there is the Divine meaning, but we cannot get it; and we have walked round it, we have looked to see if anybody could help us. We have gone to all the authorities on that particular passage, but we have not got it. There are a lot of good things being said, but somehow we are not getting what we sense is there. We put it back to the Lord and say, Now, Lord, if You want us to have that, You show us at the right time when it is necessary, not just for the sake of information but when it is going to serve a purpose. And we have gone on and left it with the Lord, and going on quietly, perhaps occupied with something else, the whole thing has just come up and been broken upon us, and we have seen it, and our faces have become wreathed with smiles. We can put our finger upon many things like that in the course of our life. They have just come and we have received them. You cannot take that away from us.

Now my point here is simply to illustrate what a tremendous thing this breaking in of light upon us is, how it lifts us out, how it fills us with glory, how it changes the outlook when there breaks in spiritual light, light which never was on land or sea, light from above. And the Lord Jesus is the sum of that Divine light. He is the light. If only our eyes were opened to see the significance of the Lord Jesus, what a tremendous difference it would make, how we should be emancipated. The need is that, to see the Son of God as having vested in Him the prerogative of Divine light-giving, because He is the light. It is with Him to come right into our scene of darkness and drive the darkness out. That is His glory, and you can know the glory of the Son of God, you can worship Him, because your eyes are opened.

He is here. Just as He, being the resurrection and the life, means resurrection at any moment, and not merely at the last day - you remember Martha said, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day", and the Lord, in effect, said, Stop, I am the resurrection and the life, and I being here, the last day may be here so far as the resurrection is concerned; it is no time matter when I am present, it can be now! - So He, being here, there may be a new creation now with a new creation light: not, I shall get light later on, but now; by this glorious intervention from without.

The glory of Jesus Christ which He had with the Father before the world was, the glory of the Son is that; that He has this sole Divine prerogative, right, power and ability to bring light. No one else can give it; it is not possible to attain unto that light. It is His gift, it is His act. That is His glory.

God’s Prerogative of Lordship Vested in the Son

One final word with reference to the glory of Jesus Christ as God’s Son. The Divine prerogative of government is vested in Him. The third prerogative of God is government. In the last issue, the decision is with God in all matters. Over and above all things, God is; He rules, and He rules in the kingdoms of men and among the armies of heaven. He governs, but He has now vested that government in His Son. "Neither doth the Father judge any man, but He hath given all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). This Divine prerogative of government, therefore, is vested in Christ.

What does that mean for us now? "The gospel of the glory of Christ". "We preach Christ Jesus as Lord". That is in substance one statement - the glory of

Christ, Christ Jesus as Lord. I think I must leave a great deal of the detail and leap right to the end of that. The glory of Christ is only really recognised when He is Lord, but it is recognised when He is Lord. I mean that God is satisfied when His Son comes unto the appointed place, and God can never be satisfied in any one direction without the one affected being aware of it. There is always an echo here of something in the heart of God which affects us. I mean that if heaven rejoices over one sinner that repenteth, that sinner will never fail to have the echo of heaven's joy. The joy which comes to a repentant sinner is not just his own joy, it is the joy of heaven, it has come of what is going on above. When the Father is well-pleased, it will be witnessed in the one in whom He is well-pleased. "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). The Son knows in His own spirit, His own heart, the delight of the Father. "The Father loveth the Son": He can say that without any conceit or presumption; and when the place to which the Son has been assigned by the Father is given to the Son in any life, or in any company, or in any place on this earth, then you may take it that the heaven is opened there, and the Father's gratification will be registered there. You never get through a struggle and battle on some question of His Lordship without knowing a new Divine joy and peace and rest in your heart. A struggle has been going on over a matter of obedience to something in the will of God, something the Lord has said; there has been a battle over it for a long time and at last you get through - "My stubborn will at last hath yielded" - and you are through. The Lord's Lordship is established, and what is the result? Rest, peace, joy, satisfaction. You say, What a fool I was to keep that up for so long! What is it? It is not just a psychological relief, that you have got past a difficult place; it is the Spirit of God bearing witness within. It is the Holy Dove lighting upon your spirit. It is the Father's good pleasure witnessed to in your heart, the Lordship of God in Christ established. We can never in reality believe in the absolute Lordship of God and not give Christ His place. That is a contradiction. For the Lordship of God to be a reality, Christ has to be Lord in our hearts. We need to see that.

The Practical Issue

What I really want to leave with you in this last word is this: do pray for the Lord to open your eyes to the meaning of the Lordship of Christ. You know, beloved, all our troubles circle round that issue. Other lords have had dominion over us. What are those other lords? There are lords many. Our own souls may be having dominion, our own sentimentalities, our own likes and preferences and judgments, our own dislikes and antipathies, our own traditions, our own

teachers: these may be governing us. Oh, the lords are so many, and they may just be governing. The Lord is desirous of bringing us into a larger and freer place, and a place of an opened heaven: something is still tyrannizing; we are in the centre, the natural self-life is on the throne, we have a horrible way of drawing everything to ourselves. Immediately anything is raised, we step into the centre of the arena, the self-life ruling on the throne: and what kind of life is it? Well, it is a life of shadows, to say the least of it; it is a life of limitation, of variableness, up and down, of weakness and uncertainty. If we want to come right out into the light, the full light, to go right on in the full light, in the glorious liberty of the children of God, all those other lords have to be deposed, and Christ has to be Lord.

Now, while I am saying that, you agree with me absolutely. You say, Yes, of course we want Christ to be Lord, we want nothing more than that Christ should be Lord, and we know He has to be Lord; we know that God has made Him both Lord and Christ! We assent. Beloved, that is all right, but what about it? When we have assented, when we have agreed, are we still going to assert our own judgments, are we still going to meet others and things in our own strength? Are we still going to be in the picture, are we still going to allow those old dominations to influence us? This establishment of Christ as Lord is a thing which can only really be done, not by assent, not by agreement, although that may be required; it can only be done by our being broken down, and we have to say to the Lord, Lord, You break down everything that You find in the way; take in hand whatever there is that obstructs Your absolute Lordship.

> "The dearest idol I Have known,
> Whate’er that idol be,
> Help me to tear it from Thy Throne
> And worship only Thee".

There may be something very dear, a part of our very being, and it is in the way; our very life, our very self. There is something to be done right in us, but oh, that we should see how much hangs upon the place and significance of Christ in the Divine economy of things, Christ as Lord. What hangs upon that? It is the glory of Christ.

Have you ever got through to a new position with the Lord where His Lordship has been established in some new way, in some new matter, in some new sphere? Have you ever got through and been miserable about it, felt you have lost

everything? You know to the contrary. The experience may have been a very deep and terrible one, but when you are through, you glorify God. When the Lord is dealing with things that are in the way of His Lordship, it is a dark time, full of suffering, but you are going to come to the place where you thank God for every bit of it. How can that be? If the Lord should make windows in heavens, might this thing be? That is what we feel when we are in the process, but I am certain, and experience in some degree bears it out, that when we are on the other side of that and the Lord has a new place in our lives, we thank Him for the depths, and we say, You were right, faithful and true. You can say that as a bit of your faith, but it is a great thing to say it as a bit of your experience. Faithful and true!

The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, the glory of Christ, the gospel of the glory of Christ as Son of God is all brought to us in terms of Life and Light and Lordship - the three L's of the glory of God's Son. The Lord lead us into that.

Chapter 7 - Seeing the Glory of Christ as Son of Man

Reading: Heb. 1:1-2; 2:5-18; 3:1; 2 Cor. 4:4-5.

In our previous meditation we were seeing the glory and significance of Christ as the Son of God, having vested in Him the prerogatives of God; firstly, the power of Life; secondly, the power of Light; and thirdly, the power of Lordship.

In this meditation we shall spend our time with another aspect of the glory of Christ, namely, the glory and peculiar significance of Christ as Son of Man. It is here also that we need spiritual sight. If men could really see from God's standpoint, with God's own knowledge and understanding, the Lord Jesus Christ as Son of Man, all the problems of this world would be solved; for really there is a sense in which all problems are solved when we see. And God's solution is His Son. Let us be found here this afternoon in our hearts waiting on the Lord that we might see. Let that be our attitude; to see Jesus in an inward way with the eyes of the heart enlightened, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation being given us in the knowledge of Him.

If I might say so here, I feel that the burden of our hearts should be that the eyes of the Lord's people should be opened first. Oh, if only their eyes were open, what different attitudes they would take, what great possibilities there would be for God, what a lot of things would disappear which are dishonouring to the Lord! If only they could see! Let us pray much that the eyes of the people of God may be opened. And then, to the end that the eyes of men at large might be opened, let us pray that there might be an eye-opening ministry like that of Paul - "...unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light" (Acts. 26:17-18). Let us pray along such lines continually. That by the way.

The Arch-Type of a New Humanity

I think there are two or three particular aspects of Christ as Son of Man. Firstly, this is the human title of Christ, and it brings to us at once the conception of Him as man, or as humanity, and the thing needed to be seen about the Lord Jesus is

the Divine meaning in His humanity. As Son of Man it is not only that He has come alongside of us, taking flesh and blood, and so becoming a man, and just being here as a man among men. Oh no, that is not it. Moreover, that is dangerous, and that only goes a little way. True He is man, true He has become partaker of flesh and blood, but there is a difference, a vast and infinite difference. Humanity, yes; but not exactly our humanity. The significance of Christ as Son of Man is that He is an arch-type of a new humanity.

There are now in God's universe two humanities, whereas there was only one. The Adam humanity was the only one, but there is another humanity now, a different humanity; flesh and bone, but without the sinful nature of this humanity, without any of that which has estranged and alienated this humanity from God, without any of that which brought this humanity under judgment from God, a humanity upon which God, in His infinite holiness and perfection, can look with pleasure and utter satisfaction. "My beloved Son in Whom I am well-pleased" (Matt. 3:17). It is a Man, but such a man as is not common among men, but altogether different. The significance of Christ as Son of Man is that God has started a new humanity according to His own mind and perfect thought, and in His Son there is the arch-type of that new humanity to which God is going to conform a race - "conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29).

Every time you and I who are the Lord's people gather to the Lord's Table and take of the loaf, we are testifying to this great fact, that we are now all of a piece with Him as a new kind of humanity; for that loaf is Christ given for us to be our life. But to be the life of that which is to answer to God in His perfect holiness, that life must be free from everything that is corrupt, everything that is subject to corruption; it must have no element of corruption in it. And that is Christ. His humanity is incorrupt and incorruptible, and that is given, and in thus receiving Him, just as food becomes ourselves, He becomes the very basis of this new inner life, this new creation, which is within us. He is its very life and support, sustenance and energy. He becomes to us the basis of an altogether other and new life and being.

The great reality about a true Christian is that he or she is progressively being changed into another, is becoming different. It is not just and only an objective matter of faith in Christ as outward. It is more than that; it is living by Christ inwardly.

So God has come into this realm of humanity in the Person of His Son as

representing a new order altogether, a new order of mankind, and, by vital union with Christ, a new race is springing up, a new order. A new kind of humanity is secretly growing, and proceeding unto that day of which the Apostle speaks, when there will be the manifestation of the sons of God; and then the curse will be lifted, and the creation itself will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

Now the point is the tremendous significance of the Incarnation, of the Word becoming flesh and tabernacling among us, the tremendous significance of Christ as Son of Man, as setting up amongst men a new kind of being, a new type and form of humanity. There is no hope for the creation save in that new type, that new order. If men saw this, would it not solve all the problems of this time? What are they talking about? What is the great phrase most common on men's lips today? Is it not a new order, a new world order? But they are blind, they talk in the dark; they are groping for something, but they see not. The only new order is the order of the Son of Man. The only hope for this world is that there shall come about this new creation in Christ Jesus.

The Truth Foreshadowed in Israel's History

We could dwell long upon the humanity of the Lord Jesus. There is a very great deal more in the Scripture about it than perhaps you realise. But do notice that God has laid this deep in the very foundations of history. You take Israel as God's great object lesson for past ages - and their history of the past still stands as the great book of illustrations of God's principles - and you find that the very national life of Israel of old was founded upon those things which set forth the perfect humanity of the Lord Jesus.

You go to the Book of Leviticus, and you take up those feasts; you see what a place the humanity (the fine flour) has in those symbols and types. You see that God has said there in illustration that the life of a people which is to satisfy Him is based upon a nature, a humanity; not the old broken-down humanity of Adam, but another. Right into the very foundation of the life of such a people, there is laid this reality: there is a humanity that is perfect and incorruptible; and out from those feasts must be extricated every suggestion and suspicion of leaven, which speaks of corruption, the ferment of the old nature. It has no place when it is a matter of the very basis of Israel's life God-ward.

Well, you see, there is much about it, but we are not going to explore the whole

ground. I simply want to point out the fact that the humanity of the Lord Jesus as Son of Man sets forth some new kind, some new type, some new order, in God's universe which does satisfy God.

Herein lies the tremendous and wonderful meaning of union with Christ through faith, bringing us right into what He is in His acceptability to God. The practical outworking of that must be that you and I more and more forsake the ground of the old Adam, of nature, our ground, and abide in Christ. That just means holding by faith to what He is and letting go what we are, and so the pleasure of God is found there. If we get on to our own ground, what we are by nature, and take account of that and try to make something good of that, or even spend our time deploring what a miserable thing that nature is, we lose all the glory of God. The glory of God is in another humanity. Dwell on Christ, be occupied with Christ, let your faith hold firmly to Christ, abide in Christ, and the glory is there. It is the glory of Christ as the Son of Man. What are the most blessed and glorious hours in the Christian's experience? Are they not the hours in which they are contemplating and taken up with what Christ is?

The Redeemer-Kinsman

Then the glory of Christ as Son of Man is to be seen in Him as the Redeemer-Kinsman. Firstly, as the arch-type of a new humanity; then, secondly, as the Redeemer-Kinsman. Your thoughts will at once go to that little classic, the book of Ruth. I need not tell you the story of Ruth in detail, but it is from there that we draw the great truths and principles of the redeeming activity of the Lord.

The story in brief is this. The inheritance has been lost. The day comes when that inheritance becomes a matter of solemn, sad, but earnest concern to the hearts of those who have lost it. Now the realisation that the inheritance has passed out of their control and right has come home to them, and they are deeply exercised in heart about the lost inheritance. There is only one way, according to the law of things, in which that lost inheritance can be re-purchased, and that is that there should be a kinsman - he must be a kinsman, he must be of their own kin - who has the right to redeem, and who has the ability to redeem, and who is willing to redeem. Those who lost the inheritance, and have now become so deeply concerned about its recovery, are looking for that redeemer-kinsman who has the right, who has the ability, the resource, and who has the willingness to redeem the lost inheritance. You know how Ruth comes into touch with Boaz, and thinking him to be the redeemer-kinsman, recognising that if he has the will, he

has the resource, she discovers that he has not the right, because there is another who comes first. An appeal has to be made to the one who has the right, and it is found that, while he has the right, he has neither ability nor resource: and he passes over his right to Boaz. Thus at length the one wholly fitted for the business is found in Boaz. He has now the right, he has the resource and the ability, and he has the will to do it.

But then there is one other thing in the story. According to the law of things, the redeemer-kinsman has to take to wife the one for whom he redeems the inheritance, and the way has got to be cleared for that. The other kinsman could not do it because the way was not clear for that, but Boaz has a clear way to do it.

There are the elements of the story. I am not going to take up every little detail, but just the broad outline. You see how God has placed there such an exquisite illustration of the glory of Christ as the Redeemer-Kinsman. The inheritance has been lost. "What is man, that thou are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet" (Heb. 2:6-8). But where is that man? Well, that inheritance has been lost, and all that God intended for man has been forfeited. Man now, through Adam's sin, has lost the inheritance. In Adam, no longer is he heir of all things, the inheritance is gone. The tragedy of this humanity in Adam is just that: once an heir, made to inherit, but now bankrupt, hopeless, having lost all. That is the tragedy of this humanity. That is where we are by nature. We have it written in our beings. Our very nature witnesses to the fact that there is something lacking, something missing, something that ought to be and is not. We are groping for it. It is in the very nature of things to crave, to long for that. Every ambition of man, every quest, every passion of man, is man shouting out of his nature that there is something he ought to have but cannot get. He accumulates all that this world can give him, and dies, saying, No, I have not got it, I have not found what I am after! He is an heir with a lost inheritance.

The Right to Redeem

And into a world like that, into a race like that, God, in His Son, in terms of manhood, comes from the outside as the Redeemer-Kinsman. He has, first of all, the right to redeem. Why? Because He is the Firstborn of all creation. He has the

First Place. This is no second-place kinsman. "He is before all things" (Col. 1:17). He is the Firstborn; He has the right because of place, the place He occupies, the first place. Oh, think again of all that there is about the Lord Jesus as coming first, as being in the first place, as being the Firstborn, and you will see that constitutes His right, for in the very nature of things in the Bible, it is the firstborn, who carries the rights with him always. Here is Jesus, Son of Man, the first by appointment and placing of God. He has the right to redeem.

The Power to Redeem

He has also the power to redeem, that is, He has the resources for redeeming. Well, let us ask what is in the nature of things required for redeeming? The inheritance has to be redeemed not only for us but unto God. We in turn are God's inheritance, we are God's possession by right, and not only have we lost our inheritance, but God has lost His inheritance in us, and what we might be satisfied with as a return, God can never be satisfied with. If God is to get back in us that inheritance which He Himself has lost through man's sin and wilfulness, its redemption must be according to God, something that satisfies God: and God cannot be satisfied with just anything. It must be something that wholly answers to God's own nature. So let us say at once that "we were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from our vain manner of life... but with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). What is it that satisfies God? It is an incorruptible something. That which can alone bring back to God His satisfaction must be incorruptible, undefiled, without spot or blemish. These are words which always relate to Christ in type, we know: a Lamb, without spot, without blemish. That is the redemption resource, the redemption power. Redemption means to recover the lost inheritance, and He has redeemed by His Blood, because that Blood represents His life which is an incorruptible life, a sinless life, a life which wholly satisfies an utterly righteous and holy God. That is the price of redemption. Can He do it? Oh, to see the humanity of the Lord Jesus in its incorruptibility, is to see the mighty power to redeem. Set aside the Lord Jesus and you set aside the whole power of redemption, the whole right of redemption; there is no hope of redemption. We can never be redeemed unto God with such corruptible things as silver and gold. To be redeemed unto God means that a life must be forthcoming which is according to God's own nature. Have you got that, have I got it? If we can find that in ourselves, then we can be our own redemption, our own redeemer: and who will say it?

Oh, this is where all the blindness is. We spoke in our previous meditation of the terrible blindness which is seen in evolution. But here is the awful blindness of that terrible gospel, which is not a gospel at all, which is being preached, namely, humanism; that it is in man's own power to become like God. The roots and seeds of perfection are deep down in man's own being if only he will dig deep enough for them; there is no need for intervention from the outside at all; it is not necessary for God to intervene, for Christ to come into this world. It is in man to rise, he can improve himself. He is a wonderful creature deep down in his being. What blindness! You say, Amazing thing in the light of present happenings and present world conditions; amazing thing that any man can believe it, let alone preach it; amazing thing that with one breath they talk about the awful atrocities which are worse than those of the dark ages, and with the next breath they say it is in man to be godlike! Blindness! With all that we may say about the courage of men; the great courage of our men in the Services, for example, and all their readiness to suffer hardship, and much more - and we do not detract from that one whit - the real point is this: are men more noble morally today?

I was speaking a little while ago to a man who has a very responsible position amongst seafaring men in the Marine Service, and he said, I have been in the Marine Service all my life, and I thought I knew how bad things could be, but things as I find them today in the Services almost shock *me*! The awful state of life morally in those Services appalls him. There is a hardened man of a lifelong seafaring career saying that. Are men morally rising? Well, who can say Yes! in the light of what we know today.

And yet they are preaching this gospel of humanism, that man is steadily rising and Utopia is on the horizon; because man has it in himself to rise! That is blindness, terrible blindness. But oh! To see God's Son, the Son of Man, is to see the hope, the direction in which redemption lies; because redemption lies in the direction of another kind of humanity, and in a power to redeem, because there is something there which satisfies God, and anything which does not satisfy God up to the hilt can never be a redeeming power. Has the Lord Jesus the power? We here all cry with one voice, Yes, He has the power, He has the resource for doing this.

The Liberty to Redeem

But another question arises. Is He free to redeem? One thing is taken for granted in this matter of the redeeming kinsman, and that is that he can only have one

wife. If he is already married he is disqualified, because he cannot marry the person for whom he redeems the inheritance. That was the trouble with the other kinsman, in the case of Ruth. He was not free; he was married and had a family. But Boaz was unmarried, was free, and he could take Ruth to wife; the way was perfectly clear.

Now we come into the realm of sublime things spiritually. "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might redeem it from all iniquity" (Eph. 5:25; Titus 2:14). "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself up for it." The redeemed is to be joined to the Lord, and the Lord Jesus - may I say it reverently? - is only going to have one wife. There is only going to be one marriage supper of the Lamb. The Church is His only Bride. His redeemed are the only ones to be brought into such a relationship with Himself; and the way is clear. He is not committed at all, He stands perfectly free to redeem, and to take the consequences of redeeming, even of marrying the one for whom the inheritance is redeemed.

Does not redemption bring us into a very sacred position with the Lord Jesus? That is the true significance of the title that attaches to Him as our Redeemer-Kinsman, that we should be joined to Him. Not redeemed as a chattel, not redeemed as a thing, but redeemed to be joined to Him forever in the holiest of all bonds. Married to the Lord. That is the meaning of the Son of Man. Yes, He is free, He can do it.

The Willingness to Redeem

Only one question remains. Is He willing? He has the right, He has the resource, He has the liberty. Will He? Oh, how Ruth and Naomi must have waited with bated breath and thumping hearts while that final question was being met and answered. Will he? Ah, but there may be no thumping heart here this afternoon, no bated breath. Will He? Is He willing? Well, what do we say to that? He has done it, and that answers the question. All that remains, if we are not in the enjoyment of it, is for us to accept it, believe it. He is willing!

May the Lord just ravish our hearts and enlarge our seeing of Jesus, the Son of Man.