

**"THINE IS THE KINGDOM,
AND THE POWER,
AND THE GLORY,
FOREVER"**

by T. Austin-Sparks

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"THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOREVER"
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Chapter 1 - What is the Kingdom?

"Verily I say unto you, There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom" (Matthew 16:28).

"To whom he also shewed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3).

"But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12).

"And he entered into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8).

"And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, shall see my face no more" (Acts 20:25).

"And when they had appointed him a day, they came to him into his lodging in great number; to whom he expounded the matter, testifying the kingdom of God, and persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved" (Acts 28:23-24).

"Then cometh the end, when he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Corinthians 15:23-24).

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come... And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matthew 6:9,10,13).

I do not know what version of the Bible you have in your hand, but if you have a modern translation you will find that the second half of Matthew 6:13 is not there. However, the people who made this version from which I am reading put a footnote, which says: "Many authorities, some ancient, add *For thine is the*

kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." Now, I am not going to have any argument with the authorities, but I believe we have very good reason for retaining the second half of that verse, and I think that the ministry that the Lord has given me for this week is based upon that questioned half-verse. I am going to speak about something in the Bible that some men say is not in the Bible: "Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever."

WHY SHOULD THOSE WORDS BE RETAINED?

Before we can go on any further we must state why we believe that that half-verse ought to be there. The whole Bible, especially the New Testament, is built upon those three words: "Thine is the *KINGDOM*" stands over the whole Bible; "and the *POWER*" stands over the whole Bible; "and the *GLORY*" - all the Bible is gathered into that. The New Testament is especially true to those three words, so that half-verse which is questioned is justified by the whole Bible.

We read that wonderful word in 1 Corinthians 15:23, which looks right on to the end of the Bible. It says: "Then cometh the end, when he (the Son) shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father." The Kingdom belongs to the Father, and Jesus included Himself in that prayer: "Our Father, which art in heaven... Thy Kingdom come." In the end the Son will deliver up the Kingdom to the Father: when He has done the work of the Kingdom He will hand it to its right owner. You will notice that this is very comprehensive: "Then cometh the end... when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power." Those are three very rich words: all *RULE*, all *AUTHORITY*, and all *POWER*. You cannot get outside of that! That comprehends every form of opposition to the will of God, and it says that all that opposition will at last be subjected and subdued. In a minute we are going to ask the question: 'What is the Kingdom?', but here we begin with this very comprehensive thing: "Our Father, which art in heaven... Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth... For thine *IS* the kingdom." The Kingdom is that which is above all other rule and authority and power that is against the will of God. 1 Corinthians 15:23 says: "Then cometh the end." The end of what? *EVERYTHING* that is opposed to the will of God. That little word: "Thy will" is a tremendous word! It reaches out to the uttermost bounds of everything opposed to the will of God.

Now the Lord Jesus knew what He was talking about. I expect you have used those words many, many times, for they are called 'The Lord's Prayer'. Whether that is the right title or not we will not discuss, but it came out of a vast spiritual knowledge; and this is one of the things, dear friends, that we must recognize in order to get an enlarged spiritual understanding: that in every small fragment that came through the lips of the Lord Jesus there was a whole universe of meaning. When we use these words: "Thy will be done", how little we understand of what we are saying!

THE BATTLE FOR THE KINGDOM OF THIS UNIVERSE

Let us see something of the range of that one fragment - "Thy will be done".

From before the foundation of this world, and all through the ages, there has been an immense cosmic conflict, and that conflict always had one issue: 'Who shall have the kingdom of this universe?' There was the One to whom the kingdom belonged, and it belonged to Him for ever and ever; and then there was the other one who aspired to have possession of that kingdom, and whose ambition was to be the "god", the "prince" of this world. And so, at some point, this great conflict commenced, this great cosmic conflict for the control of this universe. Once again we go back to 1 Corinthians 15: 'He must reign till He has *PUT DOWN* all rule, and authority, and power' - and that is what is going on now, and we are involved in that conflict. That will explain a very great deal!

We have a kind of microcosm of this whole conflict. In our arrangement of the Bible it is contained in twenty-eight chapters. It is only a little pamphlet, called "The Book of the Acts of the Apostles", but the Apostles never gave it that name! I would like to know what they would have called it. I know what I would call it, but that title is far too big and far too difficult: "A Microcosm of the Conflict of all the Ages." We think that the Book of the Acts is just a history of apostolic times. Well, it is that, but oh! it is the story of the conflict of the ages. In this little book heaven and hell are in deadly conflict, and the conflict concerns the kingdom. It is very impressive that this book *BEGINS* with the kingdom and *ENDS* with the kingdom. It begins by saying that Jesus, after He was risen, appeared unto His disciples "by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God" (1:3), and in chapter 28:31, the end of the book, the Jews were crowding into the little apartment of the Apostle Paul and he was "preaching the kingdom of God". These three words stand wonderfully over this little book! The Apostles and all the workers in that book were fighting the battle of the kingdom. They never arrived at any place in the world that then was but that this battle commenced. They went everywhere 'preaching the kingdom of God', and their arrival in every place was always anticipated by the rival to the kingdom of God. They were working out this little fragment: "Thine is the kingdom." It was not just a little bit of ritual, or a formal prayer: it was the battleground of the universe.

Now where in the New Testament did this real battle begin? It really began almost immediately after the Lord Jesus had said to His disciples: "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom," though perhaps I ought to say that it entered upon a more intensive phase from that time. There ought to be no chapter division between Matthew 16 and 17, for after that verse it goes immediately on to say: "And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them." Now there are those people and teachers who think that the Transfiguration was the fulfilment of those words: "the Son of man coming in his kingdom", but that is only half the truth. What

was the meaning of the Transfiguration? The Gospel by Matthew, as you know, is the Gospel of the Kingdom, and the Transfiguration was the manifestation of the King in His glory. You must have a king before you have a kingdom, so in the Transfiguration you have a foreshadowing of the King in glory. The Kingdom is vested in the King. They came down from the mountain - and what would you expect to happen? Well, you would expect that those men would go out into the world and say: 'We have seen the King in His glory', but Jesus said emphatically: "Tell the vision to no man until...". Until when? "Until the Son of man be risen from the dead."

Now link together two little words. "Tell the vision to no man *UNTIL*...". Then He said: "Tarry ye in the city (Jerusalem) *UNTIL* ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), and *UNTIL* 'ye receive the promise of the Father' (Acts 1:4). That little word 'until' links two things together. 'Until the Son of man be risen' - that involves the Cross. 'Until ye receive the promise of the Father' - that involves Pentecost. The Cross and Pentecost introduce the Kingdom. Before the Cross it was: 'Tell no man!' After the Cross and Pentecost they went everywhere preaching the kingdom.

We are answering the question: 'What is the Kingdom?' I hope I am not tiring you. I am only laying a foundation, and in a few minutes I will be saying something which I think will be helpful, but we must be clear as to what the Kingdom is.

First of all, the Kingdom is not a realm, but the personal rule of a Person. It is the dominion of a Person, that which belongs to that Person. You see, you must be very clear about that, because the whole conflict centres in the question of to whom the Kingdom belongs. The Kingdom is the sovereign government of God over all. It is the will of God deciding everything eventually. Only in a secondary way is the Kingdom a sphere, or a realm, and it is the realm in which God's will is absolutely sovereign: "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth." God is absolutely sovereign in heaven, and there no one ever challenges His will. Angels and archangels bow in adoration and submission to the will of God in heaven, and if the Kingdom becomes a realm, it is only the realm in which it is like that.

You will be able to tell from that whether you are in the Kingdom. It is so easy to talk about the Kingdom, and to say "Thy kingdom come", and "Thine is the kingdom", but the fiercest battle that ever raged in the history of this world rages over that Kingdom.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Perhaps some of you are not quite sure of the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of heaven. I have often been asked that question. Well, I think the answer is quite simple. If you look in the Gospel by Matthew, and

remember that that Gospel was written for Hebrews, the phrase is usually "The kingdom of heaven", but if you look where it was written in Greek you will find that it is "The kingdom of God". This is not always so, because there were always some Hebrews even amongst the Greeks, but it's a general distinction. To the Jews it was the Kingdom of heaven. Well, the Jews understood heaven, and the Greeks did not, but they quite understood deities. They had 'gods many', and 'god' was a kind of comprehensive term for them. So "The Kingdom of heaven" was all right for Jews, for they understood, and the Greeks understood "The Kingdom of God".

Well, that is only a technicality, and it has not helped you very much, but it is part of the answer, at least, to what is the difference between the Kingdom of heaven and the Kingdom of God.

THE KINGDOM IN THE HANDS OF THE ENTHRONED KING

Let us try to come to a close with something quite helpful. What have we been saying? The dominion belongs to God: "Thine is the kingdom." The securing of that Kingdom for the Father was committed to the Son, so that the Lord Jesus has the Kingdom of God vested in Himself, and as He moved from His Cross He said: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). So after the Cross, in the Book of the Acts, the Kingdom is in the hands of the enthroned King, Jesus Christ.

Now your problem arises, and here is something that is going to test every one of you. It has been my problem many times. If Jesus is on the throne of the Kingdom, and all authority is committed unto Him, what about things like this?

"Are they ministers of Christ? ...I more: in labours more abundantly, in stripes above measure, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep: in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).

And Jesus is on the throne! I venture to say that if you were in any one of those things you would ask the question: Is Jesus really on the throne? If all authority is in the hands of Jesus, why all this? And this is not the only list of Paul's troubles! Now, Paul, are you quite sure that the Kingdom belongs to Jesus? When something goes wrong, some tragedy enters into our life, when some great sorrow overtakes us, is not our first temptation to ask the question:

Is the Lord really Lord? Please, Paul, answer my question! And Paul will answer by saying: 'This is all the battle of the Kingdom. Oh, no, things have not gone wrong. They are all going right, for this all says that the devil does not like what we are doing. If you will only wait until the end, you will see.' And it was this Paul who wrote: "Then cometh the end... when he shall have abolished all rule and all authority and power." You see, we just look at the things of the present, but Paul looked through the present to the end.

Well, were all these sufferings for nothing? Was Satan lord after all? What are we doing here tonight? Millions and millions have come this way and owe their debt to the Lord through this Apostle Paul. I can see a picture: a great multitude which no man can number, out of every nation and tribe and tongue, and the Lord Jesus standing with His arm around His Apostle Paul and saying: 'Look, Paul, do you see this great multitude? Do you remember that night when you were shipwrecked, and that day when they beat you with rods? Paul, this is all the fruit of that. The Kingdom has come and your sufferings have brought the Kingdom in.' That may be a bit of imagination, but I believe there is a lot of truth in it.

It depends on how we look at things. Do we interpret these adversities as the victory of Satan, or do we interpret them as the way of the Kingdom and look through to that day when He shall have subdued all rule and authority?

Well, we have got out into a big realm! How much more there is in "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done"!

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Chapter 2 - The Kingdom Of Light In Conflict With The Kingdom Of Darkness

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Genesis 1:1-3).

"But and if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them... Seeing it is God, that said, Let there be light, who shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, 6).

"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. And the light shineth in the darkness; and the darkness overcame it not" (John 1:1, 4-5).

We proceed to consider a little further what the Kingdom of God is. We have seen that from the beginning there has been a great conflict in this universe as to *WHO* shall have the dominion. The New Testament speaks of two kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan, the Kingdom of the Son of God's love and the kingdom of that one who wants to usurp the place of God's Son, and all through the history of this world those two kingdoms have been in deadly conflict. As to the Kingdom of God, we have said that it is the sovereign rule of God. We speak of 'entering the Kingdom of God', and in that way we think of the Kingdom of God as being a sphere of God's rule, but there is something about which we must be very clear, although it is not easy to explain.

GOD RULES BY HIS OWN NATURE

We could think of a kingdom being just a place, and a number of people in that place, and then we could think of some person, a dictator, an autocrat, having dominion in that place over those people. We could say that Egypt is the kingdom of Mr..., and that China is the kingdom of someone else, but that is not the idea of the Kingdom of God. You see, God does not rule just as an autocrat or as a dictator. God's Kingdom is composed of those who are like Himself. That is what it is going to be at the end. The Kingdom is coming now, and when it has fully come it will just be, and only be, people who are like God Himself. I wonder if you understand what I mean when I say that God rules by His own nature? God's government is on the basis of what God is. That is how He is ruling now. When we say: "Thy will be done", we have to go on immediately and say: "As in heaven, so on earth." The Kingdom of God is according to that which satisfies the nature of God.

We have, then, two things to consider. The first is this: that to belong to the Kingdom of God we have to be reconstituted according to God. You know, the door is closed to every man and woman who has not been reconstituted according to God. Let us think of it like this: Someone wants to be in the Kingdom of God and they come to the door, and on that door they see the word: "*Cannot*." 'You cannot come in here. Something has to happen in you before you can come in here. This realm belongs to people who are altogether different from what you are by nature.'

You remember that the Lord Jesus told a parable of someone who made a great feast, and in order to attend and participate in that feast the guests had to wear a certain garment. Well, the people came with the garments on, but when the master of the feast came to look over the people he found one man without that garment. He said to that man: 'Friend, how did you get in here without the garment on?' In effect he said: 'You have no right here.' The master of the feast said to his servants: 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him out!' It was in that parable that the Lord was expounding this very principle: if you are going to be

in the Kingdom of God something has got to happen that makes you suitable for that Kingdom.

Now, of course, you know that I am talking about the third chapter of the Gospel by John. I am quite sure that this man, Nicodemus, would have had an awful shock if he had been told that he was the man without the wedding garment, but this chapter makes it perfectly clear that it was Nicodemus. The only difference between Nicodemus and the man in the feast was that the latter got in and was thrown out, but the unborn-again Nicodemus never got in at all. Now, you note that it was about the Kingdom that Nicodemus was concerned. He was a very religious man, and highly educated, a man held in high esteem amongst the men of this world. Perhaps you would have found no fault with him, but Jesus said to him, without any hesitation: "Except a man be born from above, he cannot *SEE* the kingdom of God" (John 3:3), and: "Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot *ENTER* into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Far from being able to *ENTER*, he cannot even *SEE*!

There is something about this Kingdom of God that necessitates having an altogether new constitution. We are hearing a great deal in our times about outer space, and we send men into it. Have you seen pictures of those men? You can hardly recognize that they are men! They are so laden with artificial apparatus that you can hardly see them. They have no natural qualification for living in outer space, and have to have artificial lungs. In a sense, they have to be reconstituted upon another principle. That is just an illustration of John chapter 3. Jesus might have said to Nicodemus: 'Nicodemus, if you got into the Kingdom of God you would die. You have not the equipment to live in that rare atmosphere.' That is very simple. If you had to bring a man or a woman whose life is in this world, to whom this world is everything, into a meeting like this, where we are singing these wonderful hymns and talking about these heavenly things, you know, the eyes of that man or that woman would be on the door all the time. They would be wriggling in their seats and saying: 'I will be glad when this is all over and I can get out. Let me get out of this as soon as I can!' You see what I mean? They are not constituted according to the realm of God.

So the Kingdom of God is what God is in His own nature. It is not just a sphere in which God rules as an autocrat. It is the realm in which God's nature is expressed. Peter spoke about His "precious and exceeding great promises through which ye may become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), and that is only another way of speaking about the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now we come to the real message for now.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD THE RULE OF DIVINE LIGHT

What is God like? If the Kingdom of God is the realm where God's nature rules, this opens a door to very many things. I only want to speak of one of those things now, but it is a matter of fundamental importance. It is the matter which just went to the heart of Nicodemus' case. The Scripture says: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5), so the Kingdom of God is the rule of Divine light, but Divine light has always been a focal point of intense conflict.

The Bible opens with a conflict. There is a state of things in nature which God attacks - He begins to make a tremendous assault upon a condition of things, and the first attack of God was upon darkness. "Darkness was upon the face of the deep", and I do not think that God just looked at that darkness and in a very soft voice said: 'Let us have some light.' I believe that there was an angry look on His face and He said: 'Let light be! This is a situation that I never intended to exist and which I will not tolerate. It is a contradiction to My very nature.' So the Divine fiat was uttered in a strong voice: "*Let there be light!*" Do you think I am reading something into the story? No, I have the whole Bible behind me to support what I am saying. That is why I gave you 2 Corinthians 4:3-6, and if you can listen to the tone in the voice of the Apostle Paul when he is saying those words, you would not find anything very meek and mild - "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving *LEST* the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should dawn upon them." This darkness is the work of the devil, and God is against it.

I repeat that the first attack of God was made upon darkness, and the natural is a parable of the spiritual. You know that throughout the whole Bible redemption is centred in light, as the redemption of the natural earth was by light. The first phase of the redemption of the earth was by reason of warfare against darkness, or light overcoming darkness.

You can take up that principle right through your Bible. I can only touch on a few points now. We were hearing about Abraham this morning, and Abraham was another movement of God's rule concerning His Kingdom, and that new movement in redemption was on the basis of light. Our brother called it vision, but it is the same thing. Light is vision, and vision is light. It was left to the great martyr Stephen to tell us how this happened: "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia" - if you like, "when he was in darkness" - (Acts 7:2). The God of glory *APPEARED*, showed Himself. Abraham had his eyes opened to see the God of glory, and all the great redemptive work of God went forward through Abraham on that basis. It was a marvellous illumination! Jesus said to the Jews: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see *MY* day" (John 8:56). What a light Abraham came into! He was a great key to the whole plan of redemption.

You leap over a few centuries and you see the seed of Abraham, the children of Israel, in the darkness of Egypt. If you want to see what God thinks and feels

about darkness, look at the ten judgments upon Egypt! God entered into a tremendous warfare with the darkness of Egypt, and that phase of the warfare headed right up to this: on that fatal night for Egypt, in all the deadly darkness, the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. The first-born sons of Egypt died in the darkness, but the first-born sons of God went out in the light. And that was not the end. All the way through the wilderness journey, in the darkness of the night there was a pillar of fire, and that light above them was in warfare against the darkness around them. They were redeemed from being lost in the wilderness by the pillar of fire, the light in the darkness.

Now, how much of the Old Testament am I to employ to show you how true this was? The Prophets were centres of light in the darkness of the people of God to redeem them from their darkness. If you take Isaiah alone, what an example he is of this very thing! His great ministry took its rise from: "*I saw the Lord... high and lifted up*" (Isaiah 6:2). Again and again he spoke about the darkness and the light, and at last, with a vision beyond, he cried: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come" (60:1).

I want to get this right home. All that is truth which may be objective, but let us come back to this: There is a tremendous conflict between these two kingdoms of light and darkness. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we are brought right to the very work of the devil: "The god of this world hath blinded." What, then, is *THE* supreme work of the devil? It is not that he makes good men bad men, nor that he drags good men down into the mire of sin, nor that he brings strong young men and beautiful young women down into moral corruption, nor makes atheists and infidels. Those are only by-products. They are the results of something else, and that is: "The god of this world hath *BLINDED*." Remove their blindness, open their eyes, and these things will be dealt with quite simply. The work of the devil is to keep people in the dark. Light is the most fatal thing to the kingdom of Satan; he fears light more than he fears anything else. He is the "prince of darkness". He has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, and why has he done so? It is a precaution against something, and one little word explains it: "*LEST* the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should shine." 'If those people get the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, *MY* kingdom is gone. The battle is over for me. I am lost.' So that Satan will do anything to keep us from having light.

There is a real touch of genius in Bunyan's "Holy War". Satan and his kingdom are making their assault upon Mansoul in order to capture it - the city of Mansoul is besieged by the powers of darkness. Satan says to his captains: 'There is one man that you must capture. If we capture that one man the city is ours. Focus all your attention upon the Lord Mayor!' What is the name of the Lord Mayor? His name is Mr. Understanding. 'When you have captured Mr. Understanding put him down in a dark dungeon so that he does not know what is happening. The rest of the battle will be easy.' That is the genius of

John Bunyan, but where did he get it? He got it from Paul. Do you remember this little phrase of Paul's: "Being darkened in their understanding" (Ephesians 4:18)? Paul is speaking there about all the moral evils of the Gentile world, and he says they are due to one thing: their understanding is darkened.

Now, dear friends, you perhaps wonder why I am speaking to you like this. You may say: 'Well, we are not in the dark. We are saved people.' I will ask you to explain one thing to me: Why is it that invariably when we are going to have a conference where the Lord is going to give more light, we have to come to it through so much conflict? That is quite true of this very conference. All kinds of things arose to get in the way. But that is only a simple example of a great truth.

We have spoken of the prophets, and they were points of light in the darkness of Israel. Will you tell me that they were not in a conflict? Because they were points of light they were points of the most vicious assault of the evil powers. Jesus said: "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12), and every day and everywhere Jesus was in conflict because He was a light. It was true of the apostles. Wherever they went, even without beginning to preach, they found themselves in conflict. It is as though the devil and his powers said: 'We will not have this in our kingdom!', and they will stop at nothing to quench the light. And the Lord says: "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). Here is the challenge. Divine light is *POSITIVE*. You cannot have Divine light and be neutral. If God has shined into your heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, your life is a challenge to the kingdom of Satan, and his attitude to you will be: 'We will get you out as soon as we can!' You will find that Satan will stop at nothing to quench that light. You see, Divine light is not just teaching and theory; it is a menace to the kingdom of Satan. Are we in the Kingdom of God? That is what it means. Individual Christians are to be like that - their very existence disturbs the kingdom of Satan.

And what is true of the individual is true of the little companies of the Lord's people. Satan does not mind you organizing communities of people called Christians. I don't think he troubles about them very much, for the simple reason that they don't trouble him, but if any little company of the Lord's people anywhere are really in the light and are focal points of the significance of Jesus Christ, Satan will do everything to destroy that little company.

I must add this as I close. Remember that this is not only an initial matter in the Christian life. Every fresh step of advance in the spiritual life is the result of some new light. We only make progress in the spiritual life by more and more Divine light, and the evil one does not want us to advance to the fullness of light. As soon as we think we have got all the light, then death will set in.

Well, I must leave it there for the present.

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Chapter 3 - The Kingdom Of Life In Conflict With The Kingdom Of Death

"And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden" (Genesis 2:9).

"And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Genesis 2:15-17).

"And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:22-24).

"The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

"The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit unto the apostles whom he had chosen: to whom he also shewed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:1-5).

"But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

We are occupied in these messages with those words: "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory", and I must take you back for a minute or two to where we began.

You will remember what we said about the last verse of Matthew 16 and the first verse of chapter 17. Jesus said to His disciples: "There be some of them that stand here, which shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom", and because there are no chapter divisions in Matthew's writing, the record runs straight on into what is our chapter 17: "Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and he was transfigured before them." Many people have thought that the Transfiguration was the fulfilment of those words at the end of chapter 16, for they think it was the "Son of man coming in his kingdom", but we have given good reasons for saying that that was only half of the truth. The Transfiguration was the King presented in His glory, but it was on the Day of Pentecost that the King came with the Kingdom, spiritually.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT THE POWER OF THE KINGDOM

Now it is from that point that we have to take things up. "Thine is the kingdom, and the power." It was on the Day of Pentecost that the Kingdom came in power, for although the disciples had seen the King, they had not received the power of the Kingdom. At the beginning of the Book of the Acts the King is speaking to them "the things concerning the kingdom", and then, having Himself been present as King and speaking these things concerning the Kingdom, He said to them: 'Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye receive power, and ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you not many days hence.'

What we want to see at this time, as the Lord helps, is what it is that the Kingdom and the power focus upon. What is it that the Kingdom and the power focus upon? In other words, if the coming of the Holy Spirit is the power of the Kingdom, upon what does the Holy Spirit focus His attention? I hope you will not think that I am exaggerating when I say that this is the most important thing in the Bible, and it is most manifestly true that it is the most important thing in the New Testament. Be very patient with me, for I want to get this very clear. What is the focal point of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Kingdom and the power?

What is the supreme mark of the Holy Spirit's interest? Let me put that in another way: What is the supreme evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit? Now I am not going to give the answers that a lot of people are giving today. They are saying: 'Except this... and that... you don't know anything about the Holy Spirit!' Whatever there may be of other evidences of the Holy Spirit, and we are not discussing that, there is one supreme evidence of the Holy Spirit, and that truth is found in the Bible from the first chapter to the last. There are, of course, a lot of these other things which are not found in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but you will find this one thing everywhere through the Bible, and it comes out into full manifestation at the beginning of the Book of

the Acts. Well, one word: Resurrection. Resurrection is the greatest thing in the Bible, and most certainly in the New Testament.

RESURRECTION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

You open your Bible with this: "The spirit of God was brooding upon the face of the waters." What was He there for? Why was He brooding over the waters? Because the world had been baptized into the judgment of death. The baptismal waters had overflowed the whole earth in judgment and everything was in a state of darkness and death, so the Spirit of God was there for the purpose of resurrection - and it is something to be noted that it was on the third day of the creation that living things came into being on the earth. The earth began to produce living things on the third day, and everyone knows that it was on the third day that the Lord Jesus rose again.

Well, we cannot pass through the whole Bible on this matter. Undoubtedly Abram was in the realm of death. The beginning of his life with God was like a resurrection from the dead, and the climax of Abraham's life was the resurrection of Isaac. Later Israel as a people were in Egypt, the place of death. The judgment of death was executed upon Egypt, but, as by the power of resurrection, God brought His people out of the land of death and darkness. It is said that they were "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:2), and we know that baptism is through death into life. Later the nation was in Babylon, the land of spiritual death, and there the Lord called deliverance from Babylon a 'resurrection'. The Lord said, through the prophet, "I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel" (Ezekiel 37:12).

That is only a very imperfect indication that resurrection governs the whole of the Old Testament.

RESURRECTION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Now when we come into the New Testament we come to these words of the Lord Jesus to His disciples: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses." What did that witness turn out to be? It is in one statement: "And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 4:33). They were witnesses to two things, or to two sides of one thing. They were witnesses to the *FACT* of the resurrection, but they were more than that; they were witnesses to the *POWER* of the resurrection.

Why did the Lord Jesus dwell forty days with His disciples after His resurrection? Luke puts it into one statement: "He also shewed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days." That is the answer to the question - "*MANY* proofs". He was going to

leave them without any ground for a question about this matter of the resurrection, and they were going to have the evidence of the resurrection by many proofs.

Now, dear friends, resurrection is not just a doctrine. It may be Christian teaching, but it is not Christian doctrine without up-to-date evidence. Do you know that all the writing and the teaching about the Lord Jesus and the resurrection was not done until thirty-five years after it all happened? I do want you to get this. You see, we have it in a book, and I could be just telling you what is in the book, for there it says that Jesus died, was crucified, and God raised Him from the dead, and then He appeared to His disciples for forty days. You can read all that in the book - but not one apostle had a book, that is, a New Testament or any part of it. The teaching came after the truth, the fact. What is in the book came thirty-five years after the fact. If people were to ask those apostles: 'Now how do you know that Jesus rose from the dead?', they would never have said: 'It is in the book.' They said: 'It is inside of us!' It is a part of our own spiritual history, and you will only have to wait a little while to see the proof of that. You will do all that you possibly can in this world to kill this testimony, every kind of power that is known will be used to kill this testimony - and this testimony will prove to be greater in power than all the powers in this universe. When Jesus said: "Ye shall be my witnesses", He meant that the apostles themselves would be personal witnesses to this great fact. When Matthew wrote his Gospel, he did so because the things that were going to be in it had already been proved to be true in the world. Christianity had got on very well for at least thirty-five years without any written record, for it rested upon facts which were proved in the lives of those who preached. The impact of this Kingdom was upon a realm greater than this world.

THE KINGDOM OF INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE

The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of indestructible life. Do you get that? Let me say it again. This is not only a statement of Christian truth; it is a test of Christian life. The Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of indestructible life, but the Kingdom of God is in conflict with another kingdom, and this is a thing we have been emphasizing all the time. We have seen that the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of *LIGHT* in conflict with the kingdom of darkness, and now it is the Kingdom of God as the Kingdom of *LIFE* in conflict with the kingdom of death.

I wonder if you have ever stopped to think about: "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you"? I think there are a lot of mistaken ideas about this matter of power. So many people tell us that *THIS* is what the power of the Holy Spirit is, and that... and that. Well, they may be more or less right, but what I am saying to you, dear friends, and what I believe to be the truth, is that the power of the Holy Spirit is the power of Divine life. If I had the time I could prove it from the Scriptures. You have only to see how power is linked

with resurrection in the New Testament to see that that *IS* the power of the Holy Spirit. What does the Word say about the Holy Spirit's action in raising Jesus from the dead? It focuses upon the life that was in Him, and says that when Jesus was in the grave He did not see corruption. Peter quotes the Scriptures about this - "Thou wilt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption " (Acts 2:27), and then applies that Scripture to Jesus and says: "Nor *DID* his flesh see corruption" (Acts 2:31). The whole natural course of things was held in control. And then Paul says: "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you" (Romans 8:11). You see, the power of the Holy Spirit was demonstrated in suspending the power of death. And then there is that superlative word of the Apostle Paul: "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Ephesians 1:19-20).

RESURRECTION LIFE THE BATTLEGROUND

Well, I think you are getting clear that the supreme mark of the Holy Spirit's presence is resurrection, but this resurrection life is always the battleground between the two kingdoms. Take the case of the Lord Jesus. It says: "In him was life" (John 1:4), and remember that that is put right at the beginning of John's Gospel and is linked with the incarnation. This Divine life did not come into Jesus at some later period in His life. It was there from the beginning. Why is the little babe, Jesus, immediately the object of the great murderer, Satan? That devil-controlled man, Herod, will murder all the little boys in order to get that one Boy. Satan wants to destroy that life before it gets a chance of growing up! Well, the Holy Spirit saw to it that Herod did not succeed.

Then, when the Lord Jesus came up from the waters of baptism and commenced His preaching ministry, He commenced where all preaching ought to begin - in His own town. He went to Nazareth, and what did He say in the synagogue there? He took the prophet Isaiah and opened at the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me" (Luke 4:18). The Divine life is within, and the Spirit is open. What was the end of that episode? The men of His town took hold of Him and dragged Him toward the edge of the hill in order to throw Him over and destroy Him. The life, the Spirit, and the warfare: the power of death seeking to destroy that Divine life.

And then, in Jerusalem. How many times did they take up stones to stone Him? How many times did they take counsel together to put Him to death? You see, it is the battle for this Divine life.

And what was true of the Lord Jesus was true of His apostles. The power of the Spirit came upon them, the Divine life was in them - and then the battle began! Peter is put in prison. He is brought before the council and the council decide to put him to death. Herod decides to put him to death. He had killed James,

and when he saw that that pleased the people, he took Peter also. Stephen is stoned, and what shall we say about Paul? He said: "In deaths oft". They stoned him, and tried to kill him many times.

What is the reason for all this? It is that Divine life. Anything or anyone who really is possessed of this gift of eternal life is a marked person by Satan. Anything that has this Divine life in it is something that Satan cannot endure. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26). Death is the great power of Satan, and the power of the kingdom of Satan. Life is the power of the Kingdom of God.

This, of course, means two or three things. The first question arises: If this is true, have we got this Divine life? Let me put that in another way. Does the devil leave you alone? Does the devil tolerate you? If there is any reason to feel that the devil is not troubled about you, that ought to be a very great trouble to you! It is a very good sign if the devil does not like you. Dead things are allies of the devil. A dead church is never troubled by him because it is his ally. Whether it be an individual Christian, or a company of Christians, if they have this Divine life they will be in a battle. It is an easy thing to say, but it is not so easy to experience. It is easy to say: 'Well, I believe that I have everlasting life,' and it is easy to say that we believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but it does involve us in a real conflict.

What I want you to take away with you is just this. This is not just teaching about resurrection. We are to be witnesses *TO* the resurrection, and, as I have said, witnessing is not even just taking the Bible and saying: 'It says in the Bible that Jesus rose from the dead.' We must not only have a Bible, we must *BE* the Bible. Why does the Lord allow the devil to attack us? In order that the testimony of the *POWER* of His resurrection might be manifested in us. Paul put it this way: "Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:10 - R.V. margin). We are the testimony to the resurrection. "Ye shall be my witnesses... the power of the Holy Spirit coming upon you."

Because that Divine life was in Jesus, in His apostles, and in the early Church, we are in the good of it today. Otherwise the best that would have happened would have been that Christianity was a story in some history books of two thousand years ago. It might even have ceased to be a story at all, so great was the power of the kingdom of death against it, but because this indestructible life was in it, and is in it, it goes on and on through the centuries. The power of death is sometimes so great that we wonder if we will survive and, like Paul, we despair of life, but, as I have said so often, up we come again! With Paul we say: "As dying, and behold, we live" (2 Corinthians 6:9).

This is the Kingdom of God in power in terms of Divine life. "Whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away"

(1 Corinthians 13:8), but that which abides for ever is that life which the Lord has protected from the garden of Eden onwards

"THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOREVER"
by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 4 - The Kingdom And The Cross

We have explained that the word 'Kingdom' means the sovereign rule of God, and because the words 'the Kingdom of God' occur so frequently in the New Testament I am sure no one will think that the sovereign rule of God only began in New Testament times. The Kingdom of God, which is the sovereign rule of God, has three phases in the Bible, and has the tenses of the past, the present, and the future.

PAST

The Kingdom of God, or the sovereign rule of God, was as much in the Old Testament as it is in the New, but its form was different from what it is in the New Testament. In the past it was outward and temporal. The Kingdom of God then was something which had to do, in an outward way, with the kingdoms of this world. God was ruling amongst and over the nations of this world, and, in a sense, the nations of this world were directly under what is called a theocracy. You will call to mind some of the things that Nebuchadnezzar said about this matter, and Daniel told those heathen kings that they had to learn that God rules in the kingdoms of men. So God's sovereign rule was over the nations in the past. It would be a very interesting and profitable study to see how God was dealing with the nations, but we should need a very large volume for that!

But while the sovereign rule of God was over the nations in the Old Testament, it was centred in and concerning one nation - Israel. You will remember that when Israel asked that they might have a king "like unto the nations", Samuel was very distressed and cried to the Lord, and the Lord said: 'They have not rejected *YOU*, but they have rejected *ME* from being King.'

The kingdom in the Old Testament, though, was largely a forecast, or a foreshadowing, of the Kingdom that was coming. That is another big subject by itself, so we just mention it and move on; but you will remember that Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, told the people that David was a type of the Lord Jesus.

That is enough to indicate that the Kingdom was in the Old Testament, that is, in the past.

PRESENT

Now we come into the present - the new phase and aspect of the Kingdom which came with the Lord Jesus. Jesus said: "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you" (Luke 10:9) and "The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you" (Luke 17:21 - R.V. margin). The change is that from outside it has come right inside - the sovereign rule of God is now amongst us in this dispensation. Jesus preached the Kingdom of God in relation to Himself. In His own person the sovereign rule of God had entered into this world, and He demonstrated that by many mighty miracles and signs. He said: "If I, by the finger of God cast out demons, then is the kingdom of God come upon you" (Luke 11:20 - R.V. margin). But the earthly life of the Lord Jesus was only a parenthetical period, that is, it was something in parenthesis.

On the Day of Pentecost the Kingdom came into this world in power, and this dispensation is the dispensation of the Kingdom amongst us. This is the dispensation of the Holy Spirit, that is, in the interests of the Kingdom of God.

FUTURE

We just take a glance at the future aspect, and then we come back to this present. The Kingdom of God is in progress in this dispensation, and in the future it will be in *FULLNESS* and in finality. With the coming again of the Lord Jesus the third aspect of the Kingdom will begin. Nations shall be gathered to judgment, and all that offends the will of God will be cast outside of this creation. Then, with the new heaven and the new earth, righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, and in the Book of the Revelation we have the cry: "Now is come... the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ" (12:10). "Thine is the kingdom... for ever and ever."

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE CENTRED IN THE CROSS

But all this, past, present and future, is centred in one thing. The sovereign rule of God, or the Kingdom of God, is centred in the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the full realization of that Kingdom everything of the past has been moving toward the Cross. Have you noticed that every new sovereign movement of God in the Old Testament was marked by the Cross? The Cross throughout the whole of the Old Testament was represented by the altar, so you have an altar with Abel, an altar with Noah, an altar with Abraham, an altar with Israel. Every movement of God is marked by the altar, or by the Cross, all pointing toward the great Altar - the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and all future movements of the sovereignty of God begin at, and move from, the Cross.

I want you to grasp this truth. There is no movement of God forward at any time in any matter except on the ground of the Cross. Do you want to go forward with God? Then you must learn something more of the Cross. Do you want to take another step under the government of God? Very well, you must learn something more of the Cross. God's movement forward with His Kingdom

is always by way of the Cross.

Now we must bring that nearer home, and to explain it we must come back to the baptism of the Lord Jesus. You remember that John the Baptist was baptizing in the River Jordan, and then Jesus came to him and asked him to baptize Him, but John would have forbidden Him, saying: "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? But Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matthew 3:14-15). And then it says: "Then he suffereth him." In other words, John baptized Him. And then it says that Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens were opened to Him, and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove rested upon Him, and a voice out of heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." You have all that in the third chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, and let me remind you that the Gospel by Matthew is the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Well, what have we here in the baptism of Jesus? We have four things, and may I say here that these things apply as much to us as they did to the Lord Jesus. They may have a special meaning in His case, but the principle applies to us. That is what the New Testament teaches. What are the four things that we have here?

1. THE KING IDENTIFIED

First of all, the King is identified by heaven - "A voice out of the heavens, saying, This is my beloved Son." the destined King of the universe, the King promised from of old, the Son of Man to whom God has committed the dominion of this world. The King is identified from heaven. God and heaven mark Him out: "This is...". What an immense amount is gathered into those words: "My Son"! It will take us all eternity to exhaust that. Paul says that we have been 'delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of his love', and that is why I said that this applies to us also, for we are translated *INTO* the Kingdom of this Son.

2. THE KING COMMITTING HIMSELF

Secondly, the King committing Himself, and there you have the very heart of the meaning of His baptism, and of baptism. This was the great committal of the King to secure the Kingdom, and the Kingdom is the Kingdom of the will of God - "Thy kingdom come. Thy *WILL* be done, as in heaven, so on earth" (Matthew 6:10). And Jesus stands there by the Jordan with His feet upon the earth and the heaven open above Him. In His own person He unites heaven and earth, and He says: 'I come to do Thy will, O God. Thou hast prepared a body for Me, and I come into that body to do Thy will' (Hebrews 10:5,7). To use the words of the Apostle Paul, He presented His body "a living sacrifice unto God" (Romans 12:1). What is the meaning of a body? The body is not you and me. This body is not me. Unless the Lord comes, this body will be put in a

coffin in the ground, but I shall not be in that coffin. I shall be with the Lord - at least, that is my hope. But what is this body? It is the vessel in which something is to be done for God, and, therefore, the body is given for a vocation. Oh, how the devil is using human bodies for an evil vocation, stealing vessels from God! The body is therefore a vessel for a vocation, and that vocation is the will of God here as in heaven. The body, then, is the means in which a mission is to be fulfilled, and in His baptism the Lord Jesus presented His body for this great mission that He had come to fulfil. As He went down into the waters of Jordan He meant: 'I die from now onward to everything but the will of God', and when He came up out of the water He meant: 'Now life for Me only means the will of God, and nothing else.' He was separated, consecrated and sanctified unto the will of God, and when it is like that the anointing can come upon the life.

The King identified: the King committing Himself - oh, may I stop just a moment before I go on. You see, this is what the Kingdom of God is. It is made up of those who have wholly committed themselves to God. Has everyone here wholly committed himself or herself to God? Have you reached the point of no turning back? Is yours a committed life? Have you said: 'Here, Lord, I give myself away. It is all that I can do'? Or have you still got some ties with the shore? You have pushed a little way out in your boat in Christianity, but you still are playing for safety - you have got your rope tied to the shore so that if it gets a bit stormy you can easily get back. When Jesus was baptized He cut all His ropes. He was wholly committed to His Father 'for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part'. You see, I have just quoted the English Marriage Service. No, death will never part us from Him! But is that how you are married to the Lord? We shall never get very far with all the teaching until we are wholly committed.

3. THE KING ANOINTED

The third thing: on the ground of His committal, the anointing by the Holy Spirit.

Anointing in the Bible is particularly related to vocation. It is the giving of the Holy Spirit on the ground of total consecration. Now there are not two works of the Holy Spirit; that is, there is not just a Holy Spirit to be a Christian and then another Holy Spirit to be a Christian worker. The Holy Spirit is one, and with one object. He is only given for vocation. You know that that is definitely stated in the Book of the Acts. A little boy was once asked if his father was a Christian, and he replied: 'Yes, I think Father is a Christian, but he is not working at it now!' In England just now there are more than half a million unemployed people, but there is no such thing in the mind of God as an unemployed Christian. The Corinthians were not very good Christians, but even to them the Apostle said: "Now he that stablisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God" (2 Corinthians 1:21).

The anointing of the Holy Spirit is unto vocation. I cannot tell you what it meant to me when I came to realize this many years ago. I wanted to be a servant of God, but there were all kinds of things that made me realize that I was not fit to be. The work of God is a very great thing. I had known of the gifts that are necessary for the work of God, but I was just without all the things that I felt were necessary. I had never had any of the advantages which I thought were necessary. I was very fond of reading biographies, and I tried to read the biographies of men who had been greatly used of God, but as I took them up I had not got very far before I read that this man who had been so greatly used had a very wonderful Christian home. His father and his grandfather were very godly people, and he inherited some of their godliness, and a great ability to be a servant of God. I would not like to tell you how many biographies were never finished! I said: 'That is not me. I can never be a great servant of God!' Then I discovered the Holy Spirit and I came to see that He makes up for all that we have not got which is necessary to God. The Holy Spirit is the *EXTRA* to me. He is other than I am, and all that was required of me was that I should present my body a living sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit would do the rest. I cannot tell you what that discovery meant to me! Now, please do not misunderstand me. I am not saying that I have become a great servant of the Lord, but I am saying that if the Lord has been able to do anything at all with me, it was the Holy Spirit that did it, and not I. It is the anointing that qualifies us for vocation.

There is a wonderful statement even about Jesus, and I think it is very wonderful when you think who Jesus was. It says: "Jesus of Nazareth, how that, God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38). Even Jesus depended upon the anointing, and it was after the anointing, and not until then, that Jesus embarked upon the mission of God. At the beginning of his Gospel Mark says: "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15). It was immediately after the baptism and the anointing that He began His ministry concerning the Kingdom of God.

Now a few words on the fourth thing, and then I close for the present.

4. THE KING GOING FORTH TO BATTLE

Immediately Jesus had committed Himself and been baptized, and was anointed with the Holy Spirit, He was driven into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Now the meaning of the baptism, that is, the committal, the consecration and the anointing, is going to be challenged by the other kingdom. Jesus said: "The prince of this world cometh" (John 14:30), and the prince of this world, the leader of this other kingdom, came to him right there in the wilderness. The right of Jesus to reign was going to be challenged and disputed

by the whole kingdom of Satan.

Now note this particularly. We have said that Jesus consecrated Himself wholly to the Father. He took the ground of 'Not My will, but Thy will. Not Myself, but Thyself.' What was the point of the attack by the devil? It was upon the self-life. Self-interest, self-pity, self-realization, self in all its forms, and every form of the self-life was included in the three temptations in the wilderness. I am not going to deal with all that, except to give you the main features and factors.

'You have been anointed with the Holy Spirit and have therefore been given Divine power. Use your Divine gifts for your own ends!' You look at those three temptations again and you see it all summed up in that. 'You have been said to be the Son of God, and therefore you have been put into a very great position. As belonging to God, and being owned by Him, you are in a wonderful position. Use your position for your own glory! You have an ambition and a vision of world dominion. You are committed to the Kingdom of God. Use your position to get worldly recognition, but remember, Jesus, you will never get world recognition unless you compromise somewhere, so,' says Satan, 'worship me and I will give you all the kingdoms of this world'.

Now every one of those temptations could be enlarged tremendously. Although you may not recognize the various aspects and applications, will you tell me that our battle with the devil is not centred in our own self-life? The devil does not come with a long tail and fire coming out of his mouth. He just comes and says: 'Consider yourself. Be sorry for yourself,' or in one of a thousand ways he brings up self-interest, and do not forget that Jesus was tempted in that way. The greatest servant that God ever had was Jesus Christ, and He was tempted in that way.

The only way through, dear friends, the only way of victory, and the only way of "Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory" is the Cross. Years ago I preached only on the Cross. I thought I knew something about the meaning of the Cross and I was always talking about it, but today, after all these years of learning something of the Cross, I have to say to you that this battle with the self-life is far more severe than ever it was before.

I leave this with you. The men and the women who are most greatly used by God and have most of the power of God are the men and the women who know most of the Cross. The Kingdom, the power, and the glory are centred in the Cross, and the Cross more and more applied to the self-life.

"THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOREVER"

by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 5 - Bringing Forth The Fruits Of The Kingdom

"Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah: and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:13-18).

"Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matthew 21:43).

THE CHURCH IS MENTIONED

We have been saying very much about the Kingdom of God, and have remarked more than once that the Gospel by Matthew is peculiarly the Gospel of the Kingdom. Now here, right in the middle of this Gospel which is all about the Kingdom, suddenly and without any explanation or introduction the Church is mentioned, and it is mentioned as though everybody understood what it meant. Jesus does not say: 'Now I am going to speak about something else. I have been speaking about the Kingdom, but now I am going to speak about the Church, and then I shall have some more things to say about the Kingdom.' There is nothing like that. It is taken for granted that these people understood what He meant by the Church, and, indeed, it was no new idea to them. It may surprise some of you when I say that the Jews knew about the Church. In that long and very interesting discourse of Stephen's which ended in his being stoned to death, Stephen said that God was "in the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38).

The point is: is it the same thing here or is there a difference? Of course there is something new here, because Jesus says: "I will build *MY* Church", so that whatever the other church was, the one that He was going to build was something other. Indeed, He had come to constitute a *NEW* Israel.

I have often been asked the question: 'What is the difference between the Kingdom and the Church?' I am not going to enter upon that subject now, that is, I am not going to discuss the technical points in the matter. If there is a difference - and I believe there is - it will come out in what we are going to say.

WHY CONFERENCES?

What is the purpose of our having conferences? We will answer that by asking some other questions.

Firstly, why is the New Testament so very much occupied with ministry to Christians? Of course, you recognize that that is a fact. By far the greater part of the New Testament is concerned with Christians.

Another question of the same kind: Why were Peter and John and Paul so intensely concerned about Christians? Indeed, they were deeply and strongly concerned about Christians. Paul at one time says that we should be 'anxious for nothing', but another time, included in all his difficulties and troubles, is 'anxiety for all the churches'. These men had a real anxiety and concern for Christians. Paul said about the Christians in Galatia: "Of whom I am again in travail" (Galatians 4:19). If you can answer this question you can answer my first one: Why is it that for many years we have had conferences?

The answer is found in the two passages of Scripture which we read. In both of those Scriptures we have a transition. In the first it is a very beautiful transition; in the second it is a very tragic one. Let us take the second first.

"Therefore I say unto you" - and this is to the Jews of His time - "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."

That is a tragic transition - the taking of the Kingdom of God away from a nation and giving it to another. We will come to the first transition in a minute, but let us say without any further delay that the Church is the concentration of the truths of the Kingdom of God. You may not quite understand what I mean by that, but the Church contains the concentration of all the truths of the Kingdom.

Now we will look at this second transition. The old Israel had all the oracles of God. We can say that they had all the truth, for they had all that came through Moses, all that came through the Prophets, and they had the full content of the Old Testament, which was the content of the Kingdom of God in the old dispensation. They had all the teaching and all the truth, all the law, the Psalms and the Prophets, but they did not bring forth the fruits thereof, and there is a very big difference between having the truth and bringing forth the fruit of the truth. There is a very great difference between having the knowledge of the Kingdom and having the fruit of the Kingdom. You know that the New Testament is always aware of a great peril in the history of God's people, for three times the dying of the first Israelite nation in the wilderness is used as a warning to Christians. That nation had had all the signs in Egypt, and all the testimony of the Passover Lamb and the precious blood, and all the experience of being brought out of Egypt and through the Red Sea by the very power of God. They had had all the supernatural provision of God in the wilderness, but that generation perished in the wilderness. It did not make the great transition, and I say that that is used three times in the New Testament as a warning to

Christians. Then the last book of the New Testament sees the Christian Church in a state of decline, and the Lord Jesus appearing to the Apostle John with strong warnings about this decline.

So the New Testament contains this warning, this fear, for Christians, and it is because there is something so much more for them and that they might miss it. That is the answer to the question: Why conferences?

CRISES IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Let me say to the most experienced and mature Christians here, even to those who are the leaders, the teachers and the preachers to God's people: be careful that you never come to the place where it is not possible for God to do a bigger thing in your life than He has ever done before. You may have a lot of experience and a lot of history. You may have been a Christian for many years and have done a lot of Christian work and preaching, but we never reach a point where it is not possible for God to do something that He has never done before.

Now we have been giving a great deal of teaching. Do you think that that is all that we came here to do? Is that what you came here to get? Did you come here only to get your notebooks full of notes of teaching? Well, that is not my idea about the conference. We are here for a crisis. The idea of these conferences is that there should be crises in lives, and the teaching is only intended to bring us to such crises.

I do not present myself as an example, but so far as I am concerned, conferences sprang out of a crisis. I did not say over thirty years ago 'Now it will be nice to have some conferences in which we will give the Christians a lot of teaching.' God had brought about a tremendous crisis in my life. I had been a minister of churches for years. I had organized a tremendous amount of Christian work. Oh, yes, I was a very busy minister! And I was a Bible teacher. I was a member of a Bible Teachers' Association; - and then God brought about a crisis, such a tremendous crisis in my ministerial life that all the past was as nothing. From that crisis everything was changed. There was a new ministry because of a new life. I have always called that my 'opened heaven'.

Now I am not saying that I am your example, but I am getting to grips with this principle. I doubt whether there is anyone here who is more fully occupied than I was before that crisis, but I repeat, when God did that new thing in my life the past was as nothing.

Now our concern and our purpose in having conferences is that *CHRISTIANS* can say: 'God has done a new thing.' We know of a brother in Scandinavia whom the Lord had used quite a lot. He came to a conference and God met him in such a way that he says today: 'At that time, and in that conference God

gave me a new Bible and an altogether new vision.' For years since that time God has been using him as He never used him before.

What I am saying is that there is a transition which has to be made. I will begin at the beginning, where the transition really begins, and it is in this matter of gathering the fruits of the Kingdom into the Church, that is, the Church becoming the embodiment of the *FRUITS* of the Kingdom.

DISTINCTIVENESS OF TESTIMONY

The first thing about the Kingdom of God, whether it is in the Old Testament or in the New Testament, is this: The Kingdom of God is always selective and distinctive. The rule of God came down into the nations and took hold of one nation, selecting it from among the nations.

The first law of the Kingdom of God is separation. You have only to look at the history of Israel to see that. God said to Israel: 'You are a separate nation and are different from all the other peoples in the world.' That Israel lost its distinctiveness, for they intermarried with other peoples. You read the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. What a terrible business it was to separate the Lord's people from the ones they had married! They lost their distinctiveness of life and vocation, and the distinctiveness of their testimony in the world. They lost the fruits of the Kingdom of God. They had all the tradition, all the teaching and all the oracles, but they lost all the fruits thereof.

So the first fruit of the Kingdom of God which has to be recovered is an absolute distinctiveness of life and testimony. Christianity is in a terrible position today. There are those who are saying that the day of Christianity is over and it is no longer a force to be reckoned with. Of course, that is an extreme view, but there is a great deal of truth in it. The impact of New Testament Christianity has been largely lost, and it can no longer be said: 'The men that turned the world upside down have come here.' The best circles of Christianity are troubled about their lack of power. What is the reason for this? The Church has got mixed up with the world. It is in captivity to the world. It is having to use all the world's means, ways and resources to carry on. It has not got enough of the real joy of the Lord to prevent it from going to the world for its pleasures.

Now you may think that I am out of date, but I do not believe that it is necessary to have worldly entertainments and all those things to carry on Christianity. I believe that it is possible to have the most living testimony and the most joyful life without any worldly entertainments. The loss of power is due to the loss of distinctiveness.

DIVINE LIGHT BY DIVINE REVELATION

I want now to come back again to this very vital matter, and I want you to listen to this, especially my brethren in ministry. Earlier we said that the Kingdom of God is the Kingdom of light. That was the first great thing in my crisis. I must speak out of my experience to explain what I mean. I have told you that I was preaching a great deal and was a Bible teacher. Well, how was I doing it? I was a member of several theological libraries and I used to go and spend hours in them, studying all the authorities on the Bible. Sometimes I studied so hard and so long that I had to get up and go for a walk because my head was going round and round. I was having to find the straw to make the bricks, and it was hard work, but it was deadly work. It was all the work of my head, my reason - 'flesh and blood' was revealing all that to me. And then the crisis came. What was the difference? It was no longer reason, but revelation. It was no longer just human brain work, but Holy Spirit inspiration. Yes, the Bible was a new book. Before, I could have given you a very good lecture on the Letter to the Ephesians, putting it all out on the blackboard, but when God made that transition I saw what I had never before seen in that book. My spirit was released and I had a new world. The transition was from reason to revelation, and it was a very wonderful transition.

THE FRUITS OF THE KINGDOM FOUND IN THE CHURCH

Now we come back to the first passage of Scripture that we read. Peter, in a moment of inspiration, said: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." What did Jesus say? 'Oh, Simon, you are a blessed man! Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you. You did not get that in the schools, nor by going to the theological libraries. You did not get that by your own brain effort. Flesh and blood did not reveal that to you, but my Father in heaven.' You can go through the New Testament and you will find that phrase 'Flesh and blood' again and again, and wherever you find it you will see that it is under a veto. It says: "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 15:50), and the first and second chapters of the first Corinthian letter are an enlargement of that fact. "The natural man" (which is only another word for flesh and blood) "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God... *HE CANNOT KNOW THEM*" (1 Corinthians 1:14). Flesh and blood cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, for they are only known by the spirit.

Here is a transition. Peter had been receiving all the teaching of Jesus and had seen His wonderful works. He knew all of that - but it never saved him from denying his Lord! It never prevented him from being a contradiction to all the teaching, but later on, when Peter got his 'opened heaven', he was free from Peter. The great transition has been made. Now the teaching is alive. Before it was truth, words, but now it is alive. He has entered into the *FRUIT* of the Kingdom, and the fruit of the Kingdom is light. The old Israel went out in darkness. Jesus said to them: "The sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12), and that is where they have been for nearly two thousand years - in the outer darkness with "the weeping and

gnashing of teeth". The Kingdom was taken from them and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof, and Peter says that it is the Church that is the holy nation, so that it is in the Church that the fruits of the Kingdom are to be found.

EMPTYING OF SELF UNTO MORE FRUIT

I must close, but just this last word. I said that this passage in Matthew 16 represents a great transition. It is the transition from all that is meant by flesh and blood, the transition from natural energy, natural wisdom, and all that is of ourselves, even in Christianity, to that which is in life and revelation. Do you want that? With all that you may have, do you not want more of that? After the transition in Peter's life he went on and on and on. We have it indicated that he had some more crises after that big one, but every new crisis brought him into more of the fruits of the Kingdom.

What are you going to do about it? Are you going to say: 'Lord! Lord! make it like that with me!?' Will you do that? Have you the *COURAGE* to do that? Do you recognize that immediately after that episode in Matthew 16 Jesus began to tell His disciples that He must go up to Jerusalem and be delivered into the hands of wicked men, and that they would kill Him? Peter said: 'None of that, Lord. Oh, no, Lord, this shall never come to You.' Peter was at that moment in danger of shutting the door to an opened heaven, for the opened heaven lies by the way of the Cross. You will only have more of the fruits of the Kingdom as you have less of the fruits of self. In the Cross of the Lord Jesus Peter was emptied of himself. He was a broken man, but that was the way to the heavenly fullness.

Will you say: 'Lord, make this all real!?'

"THINE IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY, FOREVER"
by T. Austin-Sparks

Chapter 6 - The Glory

We have said much in these evenings about the Kingdom, but, of course, as is always the case in these conferences, we have twelve basketfulls over and we have more at the end than we had at the beginning. Someone said to me this evening: 'We had better stay for another week!' Well, you may have different views about that, but there is so much more to say about the Kingdom.

We have also said something about the power and the same is true about the power as about the Kingdom. There is far more to be said than we could say in a week.

Now for the last word in these evenings we shall say something about the glory.

ALL GOD'S WORKS AND WAYS ARE WITH GLORY IN VIEW

Glory is the supreme and all-governing thing in all God's works and ways. The order of words here is quite correct: not 'the glory, the kingdom and the power', nor 'the glory, and the power and the kingdom', but 'the kingdom, and the power, and the glory'. We have said that the Kingdom is the sovereign rule of God, and the sovereign rule of God and the power of God are all directed toward the glory of God. It is not the rule alone. It is true that God rules, but He rules with a purpose. It is true that the power belongs to God, but He does not just use His power to no purpose. His rule and His power are for His glory.

GOD'S NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

We have said that glory governs all the ways and works of God. Glory governed God in the creation. He made all things for His glory, and when He surveyed His creative work He said: "It is very good". I have said before that if God looked upon us and said: 'It is very good!' that would be glory for us. Some of us hope that at the end He may be able to say: 'Well done, good and faithful servant!', and that is only another way of saying: 'It is very good'. If He could say that to us it would indeed be glory for us! Glory, then, was the governing thing in the creation.

Then you will see that all through history every new beginning of God was with glory. It was indeed a great and wonderful new movement of God when He visited Abram in Ur of the Chaldees. Stephen tells us that "the *God of glory* appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts 7:2), which means that God had glory in view when He took hold of Abraham.

Everything was not good in the days of Noah, but when God made a new beginning after the flood Noah built an altar upon the new earth, and in so doing he said: "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof". In other words, he meant that the earth was for the glory of God, and after judgment God comes back to claim the earth for His glory.

We move on to the great movement of God with Israel as a nation. God visits the nation in Egypt to bring out that people to be a people for His glory. I think that one of the most beautiful phrases in the Old Testament is that one which came through the lips of God when He said: "Israel my glory" (Isaiah 46:13). His new movement with Israel in Egypt was in order to have a people for His glory, and having got them out of Egypt into the wilderness, He took the next step. He gave Moses the pattern of the tabernacle, and when 'all things were made according to the pattern shown in the mount' (Hebrews 8:5), the glory descended and rested upon the tabernacle and it became the tabernacle of

glory.

We move on hundreds of years. God gave the pattern of the temple to David, and when all things were made according to the mind of God we read that "the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:11).

We move on still many years and come to the time of the prophets. When we have summed up all the voices of the prophets they are resolved into one thing - the cry for the recovery of the glory amongst the people of God.

GOD'S NEW BEGINNINGS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Over we go to the New Testament, and to the little town of Bethlehem. He who is called 'the Prince of Glory' is born there, and that night the angel choir sings: "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14). This is indeed a new movement of God, and He breaks into this world in glory. The birth of Jesus was with glory, and all the works of Jesus while He was here had one object in view - they were all for the glory of God. In John's Gospel we have the seven 'signs' that He performed and then an eighth and the last one gathers up all the others into itself - and, of course, it had to be the eighth, for, as you know, the symbolic meaning of eight is resurrection. In it Jesus said: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the *glory of God*" (John 11:4). All His works were unto glory.

What shall we say about His resurrection? Yes, His own resurrection is the crown of everything, but it was a new movement of God. God is going on in the power of resurrection, and there is no one who will question that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was a glorious thing.

Then what about His exaltation? He was received up into *GLORY*. John said at one time: "The Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified," so that the supreme thing about Pentecost is that Jesus is glorified. Pentecost is not something in itself - it is what it means.

And on we go still. What about that coming glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ? Indeed it will be glory when He comes!

GLORY IN THE CHURCH

That all has to do with Himself, but we step back a bit and think of the Church. The Apostle Paul said that in the end Christ would "present the church to himself a *GLORIOUS* church" (Ephesians 5:27). The Church came in with glory on the Day of Pentecost. It commenced its pilgrimage here with glory, and those early chapters of its history are chapters of the Church's progress in glory. Born in glory, *PROGRESSING* in glory, and to be *CONSUMMATED* in glory: "not having a spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27).

THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER

Let us get closer still and come to the individual believer. The birth of the new believer is with glory, and if there was no glory about the beginning of your Christian life, you had better ask the question as to whether you are a Christian! Every true Christian looks back upon his or her beginning with praise to God, for it was such a glorious thing. *BORN* in glory.

Are you going to agree with me when I say '*PROGRESSING* in glory'? Have you some question about that? How long have you been a Christian? One year - five years - ten years - twenty years - fifty years? Whether it has been one year or fifty years, has it all been very easy? Have you had *NO* times when you feared that your faith would fail? Have there been no times when you wondered whether you would be able to go on at all? Has it all been so very easy? Have you not had many difficulties? Why are you here tonight? It is all to the glory of God that you are here, not because *YOU* were so strong, nor because you had such a wonderful faith but "kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5, A.V.). "Thine is the *POWER* and thine is the *GLORY*." Our very going on in the Christian life is all to the glory of God. *BORN* in glory, *KEPT* by glory, to be *CROWNED* with glory.

Well, have I said enough to prove that *ALL* God's works and ways are with glory? Christianity is a system of glory. It begins with glory and the last picture in the Bible is that symbol of the people of God in the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, "having the glory of God" (Revelation 21:11).

THE GLORY OF GRACE

But we have to stop and think again. What is the glory of God in this dispensation? It is the glory of grace. Have you noticed how often 'grace' and 'glory' are put together? Even in the Old Testament it says: "The Lord will give grace and glory" (Psalm 84:11), and in Paul's Letter to the Ephesians grace and glory are brought together in a wonderful way. Grace is always the basis of God's glory. He shows His glory and the riches of His glory by the way of grace. That relates to our salvation, for God saves us for His glory, not first of all for our glory, but for His own glory, and in order that He may get the glory it has to be by His grace. It is not by works of ours that we are saved, but solely by the grace of God. Why is it that so many people have such a bad time in order to be saved? Because they have been trying to save themselves. They have been struggling with their own sin. They have been trying by all manner and means to find salvation in themselves, and if they could do that in the smallest way they would take the glory. So, whether it is an unsaved person or a saved person, God lets them get on with it as long as they wish to try, and when, sooner or later, they come to the place when they say: 'I can do nothing about it. If I am going to be saved at all it can only be by the grace of God', it is then that God steps in, because now He is going to get the glory.

Some of you Christians think that is very elementary, and yet, you know that it is not elementary. You know that all through the Christian life that principle is at work. Again and again we come to the place where we say: 'Well, but for the grace of God I will never get through.' We may not think so, but that is the most helpful position to come to. We sang when we started this meeting: "Tis the Church triumphant singing Worthy the Lamb!" and it will never be 'Worthy me', or 'Worthy you', or 'Worthy this preacher and that teacher'. God takes great pains to steal the glory from us, and it is "Worthy the Lamb!" In our salvation all the glory will come to God.

And what is true of our salvation is also true of our service. All true service to the Lord is governed by this one law - God being glorified. God has given us a great example of that in history. I do not think that I am exaggerating when I say that the Apostle Paul was the greatest servant that the Lord ever had - of course, we except the Lord Jesus. That man Paul had great natural gifts and qualifications. He had tremendous natural resources, but there has never been a man who more readily acknowledged that all his work was by the grace of God, and God took great pains to keep that man on the basis of grace. He emptied him of physical strength - Paul spoke often of his physical infirmities. He emptied him of all intellectual strength, and Paul often did not know what to do or which way to turn. He had to get all his direction from the Lord. I think I need not work this out in detail, for it is so evident. Paul summed it all up with one statement: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Human weakness, Divine strength and Divine glory. The Lord keeps the power and the glory to Himself.

Well, we could spend a lot of time on ministry to the glory of God, but we just touch it and pass on, and we come on to something which is perhaps still more helpful.

The same Apostle spoke very much about his sufferings, and the attitude of the Apostle Paul toward his sufferings was just wonderful. I wish that I were more like Paul in this matter! He gives us some long catalogues of his sufferings - sufferings in his own body, sufferings in his circumstances, sufferings in the world, sufferings on land and sufferings on sea, sufferings from enemies without and sufferings from false brothers within. It is a long list of sufferings, but how did he look at them? Oh may the Lord help us in this matter! Paul gathers them all together and then he says: "Our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (2 Corinthians 4:17). That must have meant this: 'Oh, here is another bit of suffering. This is very hard for the flesh to bear, but there is something of the glory of God to be realized in this. I cannot see it for the moment, but it is going to work out for the glory of God... "As always, so now also Christ shall be

magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death" (Philippians 1:20).

Don't you wish you were more like that? I wish that every time some trouble came I said: 'This is for the glory of God!' Whether we take that attitude or not, God means it for His glory.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE GLORY OF GOD

Now, the glory of God is always over against a background of what is contrary to the glory of God, and that is where grace comes in. "That I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn (or stake) in the flesh, a messenger of Satan" (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul said that it was something driven right through his flesh to keep his pride down, and he says: "Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee..." and then Paul said: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses." Suffering... grace... glory.

OUR CHRISTIAN VOCATION

Now I have a lot more that I wanted to say about this, but I want to close with one thing. All that I have said leads us to one thing: it shows us what is our Christian vocation. What is the Christian vocation? That means your vocation and my vocation. The Christian vocation is the vindication of Jesus Christ. We are here to vindicate Jesus, and first of all to vindicate the present livingness of the Lord Jesus.

"He lives! He lives!..."

You ask me how I know He lives -"

'Oh, the New Testament says that He died and rose again two thousand years ago.' No, that is not an up-to-date vindication of the living Lord Jesus!

"He lives within my heart!"

It is "Christ *IN* you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).

We are here for the vindication of the livingness of the Person of Jesus Christ and for the vindication of the reality of His work in men and women. It is quite true, according to the record, that He did some wonderful things in men and women when He was here, and that is a wonderful story of long ago, but the vindication of Jesus Christ is that He does just as great a work in us today as He did then. He has opened very much more important blind eyes than the eyes of the body. When we were singing that chorus yesterday - "Turn your eyes upon Jesus" - our brother told us why it was so precious to him, but I can carry his story a little further.

When I was once in Los Angeles, Mrs. Helen Lemmel, who wrote that hymn, sent a message to me to ask if I would go and pray with her. I went to her home and there was the dear old lady sitting in her blindness. She had a writing pad on her knee and was writing choruses. She said: 'Mr. Sparks, I have a problem, and I want you to pray about it. The surgeon has told me that if I will have an operation on my eyes, he thinks that possibly I may recover my sight. My problem is this: If I were to recover my natural sight would I lose my spiritual sight? I have learned so much of the Lord in my blindness, and I would far sooner remain blind naturally and keep my spiritual sight. Will you pray for me that I may know what to do?' Before I prayed I said to Mrs. Lemmel: 'Mrs. Lemmel, what does your heart tell you to do?' She answered: 'I think I have already decided. I am not going to have an operation.' Well, I did pray, but I had no faith for asking for her sight.

Now, if you want to argue about that, you can go and argue, but what I am saying right up to date is that Christ opens more important eyes than the physical ones, and in that way, among many others, we are here to vindicate the works of the Lord Jesus.

And we are here to vindicate His grace in suffering. Paul said: "The sufferings of Christ abound unto us" (1 Corinthians 1:5). Now I hesitate to speak in this way because I know the weakness of my own heart, but it is true, is it not, that Christians have a lot of sufferings that other people don't have? Have you not often said: 'Why should this come to me? It does not come to these other people. Why is it like this?' Because it is through grace that we are to come to glory by way of suffering. God is glorified by grace in our sufferings. Paul spoke of the time when he was 'pressed beyond measure', and had "the sentence of death within ourselves" (2 Corinthians 1:9). Now here is a word that you did not expect to hear from the lips of the Apostle Paul. This man of great faith, of great spiritual strength, said: "We *DESPAIED* even of life." Paul in despair? Well, he said it, but then he added: "In order that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead." 'We were brought right down as low as that in order that the God who raises the dead might get the glory.' It is not the strong people who bring glory to God, nor the clever people, nor the important people, but "God chose the foolish things of the world... the weak things of the world... the base things of the world," and if that is not enough, "the things that are not" (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). You know that that is what Paul said. Why? "That no flesh should glory before God."

So, dear friends, everything in the ways and works of God is for His glory. Let us bind that to our hearts. As we go back down into the world of conflict and into experiences of suffering, let us hide this word in our hearts and ask for grace to say: 'This is unto glory.'

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever." Do you say "Amen"?

