

Features of Zion by T. Austin-Sparks

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Chapter 1 - The Stability of Christ

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King... Walk about Zion, and go round about her; number the towers thereof; mark ye well her bulwarks; consider her palaces: that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death” (Ps. 48:1,2,12-14).

“He looked for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10).

“For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11).

“His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob” (Ps. 87:1-2).

The words of the twelfth verse of Psalm 48 suggest a contemplation of Zion as a whole. “Walk about Zion, and go round about her.” It is not possible to piece together all that is in the Scriptures about Jerusalem and Zion without being carried out and on to the Lord Jesus and to His church. It would be of very little value to us in our spiritual lives, in all our conflicts and our sufferings and our perplexities and in all that goes to make up the walk with God, to have in the Bible a lot of things said about some city in some part of the world which has had a great history and a lot of attention drawn to itself as being the centre and object of many a quarrel and dispute and conflict, a city in which the nation to which it belonged had a great deal of pleasure and delight and about which its psalmists composed psalms, praises and other adulation. It would be very little help to us to just have that as something recorded and handed on as a book. The Bible is not like that. Neither is the Bible intended just to be a book from which we draw lessons That is, certain things happened long ago and you draw lessons more or less from them, you make them examples. It is very much more than that. Everything that is here in the Scriptures is something which is timeless and which is therefore at hand to be of value in a spiritual way in any moment. In a word, it is all gathered into the Lord Jesus, and then is brought to us in the Holy Spirit to be

made of practical, present value in our spiritual experiences and, great as is the amount about Jerusalem and Zion, it is all about the Lord Jesus. As I have said, it is impossible to sit down and gather together all these things under these names, if you have any spiritual illumination at all, if you are in any way being taught by the Spirit of God, and not to be transported to the Lord Jesus and find these things belong to us in a very real inward way. So that the contemplation of Zion in the Spirit will become a contemplation of Christ. Just as Jerusalem is a comprehensive symbol in many numerous particulars, a symbol of divine meanings, so Christ is the reality of all those meanings brought into a vital organic relationship with believers. We see Christ speaking in this many-sided symbolism, speaking right into our lives, going right down to the very depths of us with challenge, comfort, assurance and all the things that we need. For anyone who knows the Psalms alone, knows how many things are said in connection with Jerusalem and Zion for the comfort and help of the Lord's people.

We have often noted that the book of the Psalms compasses the whole range of human need, and has ever been that to which the people of God in their hours of need have turned. What a history there is of turning to the Psalms and finding in the Psalms something to meet almost any need of which we can be conscious. It is as though those who wrote the Psalms were caused to pass through all the experiences of which men are capable and to cry out for and find God in those experiences. Yes, it is like that, and if so much of it is gathered up into connection with Jerusalem and with Zion, then it is all pointing towards and summed up in the Lord Jesus. It simply means that He is the answer to the sum of all our need. He speaks to us as Zion spoke to Israel of old and to those Psalmists who passed through those many experiences.

Chapter 2 - The Foundations of Zion

Now the other passages which we have read refer to one phase of this whole matter of Jerusalem and Zion - that is, her foundations. The passage in Hebrews 11 referring to Abraham said that he looked for the city which has the foundations. Then the apostle Paul says the only foundation is Jesus Christ, there is no other foundation. Then the Psalmist says, "His foundation is in the holy mountains." God's foundation is in the holy mountains. You remember the word of the Lord to Abraham was that he was to go to a distant mountain, the land of Moriah, and offer Isaac for a burnt offering there. And, reaching the summit of Mount Moriah and looking across the intervening space of time, the next appearance of Moriah is in David's day. You remember the story of David's failure over the numbering of Israel, the devastation throughout the land, and eventually the threshing-floor in Mount Moriah, and there the offering to the Lord and the ravage of death stayed, the sacrifice, and the temple secured, the place of the house of the Lord, and you reach another phase, another point, in the foundations of the house of God. And the next time, without mentioning the name Moriah or any earthly mountain, looking from that point with David on over another long period of time, you come to what Abraham looked for - the city which has the foundations. You come to Christ and you come to the heavenly Jerusalem and see what God has been moving towards all the way, and you find that Abraham's experience was foundational and David's experience was foundational. And if you gather up the meanings of the offering of Isaac, as of receiving him back as from the dead, the meaning of that great mercy of God to David on Mount Moriah, you find exactly what spiritual foundations are. To those we shall come presently, but here it is foundations which are in view, Zion's foundations.

The Importance of Foundations

Foundations are exceedingly important things. Sooner or later, everything, as to its real value, will be determined by the foundations. There is a sense in which we are never finished here with foundations. Of course, there is another sense in which the foundations are laid once and for all, and we are not supposed to go back and lay the foundations again and again. But there is another sense in which we are never finished with foundations, though they may be laid. We are always being dealt with on the basis of our foundations. God is dealing with us in the light of our foundations or His foundations. Sometimes a great building will completely collapse, and when investigation is made, it is found that the trouble was in the foundations. Sometimes a building will become a very distorted thing. Only a few days ago I saw in Scotland a building. It was straight when it was put up, but now one wing was at this angle, another wing was at that angle. The windows would not close, no door would fit, everything was askew, and of course there is no difficulty in explaining: the foundations have given way, they simply have not stood up to things. That building was exposed to a large extent of open country. Across that country, down from the mountains beyond, came the winds, and they discovered the foundations, and there is the building all over the place. These things are true of many lives. Some collapse entirely, some become distorted, twisted, all topsy-turvy, confused, all angles, and it is just foundation trouble. Some reveal terrible inconsistencies in the superstructure, raising great questions as to the thoroughness of the work which underlies. It is all a matter of foundations so often. We can become very top-heavy with our superstructure truth. We can have all the truth of the church, the Body of Christ, and all these heavenly things which in themselves are perfectly true, and we may have them all as a matter of teaching; and something happens in the day of adversity and we go to pieces, we just do not stand up, we are found out, we collapse. We are all having to make confessions along that line. We break down. There is some weakness somewhere in the matter of foundations.

Well, what is the meaning? What must we do? We must contemplate

Christ afresh, firstly in relation to foundations. If He is the foundation, if Zion takes its character from Him, and if Zion is all that these Scriptures says Zion is - "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God" (Ps. 87:3); "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps. 87:2); "Beautiful in prospect is Zion, the joy of the whole earth" (Ps. 48:2) - so you can go on - if those things are true and such a Zion takes its character from its foundation, then in order to have such things as being true of us, of the church, we must look at the foundation, that is, we must look again and yet again at Christ.

The Stability of Christ the Foundation

One thing here which of course immediately rises in connection with what I have been saying which is perhaps the first, the supreme characteristic of Christ as foundation and of every right foundation, and that is stability. That is what a foundation is supposed to be - stable, to have stability. Oh, how steady He was; how quiet, how confident, how assured, how unmoved, how imperturbable was the Lord when He was here. Nothing moved Him, nothing shook Him, nothing made Him waver. He quietly, steadily, in composure, faced every on-rush of adverse forces from earth and from hell. Indeed, He was a Rock. With the fast-gathering storm, the nature of which He knew perfectly, about to break upon them all, the most terrible storm in history, forces of hell working through every earthly means, right on the edge of it He said, "Let not your heart be troubled" (John 14:1). He knew the trouble that was coming to Him and to them. "Let not your heart be troubled." Yes, that is the Lord Jesus. Stability!

The Secret of Christ's Stability

But what was the secret? It was not just human composure, the strength of a great soul, of a great will. There was a secret. His life was deeply rooted in His Father in heaven. That was a favourite phrase of His - 'Father in heaven'. His whole life was deeply rooted, or, to keep to our metaphor, founded and grounded in His Father in heaven. A heart relationship is implied by "the Father", "My Father".

Now, that heart relationship with His Father was not a thing which just existed in His case in a way in which it does not exist in our case. I mean, it was something that was put to the test and tried in every way. Satan did his utmost to interfere with that heart relationship with the Father. "If thou art the Son..." (Matt. 4:3). Everything was focusing upon that heart relationship with the Father. There is the insinuation that this One in need, in weakness, is not being cared for by the Father. "If thou art the Son...". The last terrible ordeal was focused upon the same point. "The cup which the Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11).

Oh, what a cup! What a bitter cup! But He said "The cup - not that God has imposed upon Me, not that I must be resigned to it - which the Father has given me'. My Father gives Me the most bitter cup that ever man has been called upon to drink - My Father gives it. You see the point. It is a terrible cup, but it is handed by the Father. That speaks of a heart relationship, does it not?

Yes, tested in that relationship, along every line, and passing it on to His own. "Your heavenly Father knows..." (Matt. 6:32). "My Father... your Father" (John 20:17). The Father in heaven; the place where He was rooted, where His foundations were, that place was altogether outside of this world. It needed to be. Only so could there be stability. If His foundations had been in this world, well, there would be no stability, no security here. His foundations were outside of this world. Oh, thank God that there is a place of security outside of our world. The apostle uses another simile when he speaks of the place of the anchorage of the soul, sure and steadfast, within the veil (Heb. 6:19). It is the same thing; an anchorage, yes; a place of foundation, yes; a place of rooting outside. Christ had His foundation outside of this scene and all that belongs to it. Paul puts that into a phrase - "Your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3), outside of this scene. Hidden, yes, foundations are always hidden, but oh, how important they are!

Christ's Stability Must be Ours by the Spirit

If the Lord Jesus is the foundation, how is He the foundation? If that is true as to His foundation, and that has got to be true of us - how? We have been so superficial. We have said, Yes, "other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ", and that means His Deity, His Godhead; that means that He accomplished a great atoning work on His cross, He rose from the dead, He ascended to heaven, He is there at the right hand of the Majesty on high, He is coming again, and these things comprise the foundation. That is all true, do not misunderstand me, I am not taking anything from that, but I want to say we can believe all that and be terribly shaken and completely collapse. We can believe it as a matter of doctrine and as a matter of facts, and yet somewhere, somehow, there is a gap between our perfectly orthodox doctrine, our sound doctrine and the stability of our lives, the straightness of our lives, the consistency of our lives. Somewhere there is weakness, and yet we have all that. Jesus Christ as the foundation is not so only as a matter of doctrine or in any objective way. The Holy Spirit has come to enter into us as the Spirit of Christ. Paul speaks of the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and by the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ he would be able to do certain things (Phil. 1:19). What did he mean, and what is that? It just means that what has been wrought and ratified in the Lord Jesus and perfected in Him through testing, through suffering, through trial perfected, is now, by the Holy Spirit, made true in us. We shall take our character from Him by the Spirit, and we too shall become, if not all at once, yet quite definitely in a progressive way more assured in our hearts, more steady, more confident, more unmoved. Our early storms are child's play, but even then to a child a little adverse wind is a terrible hurricane, it is awful. As we go on with the Lord, we find that we come up against blasts, cyclones, of spiritual adversity, trial and assault which no child could stand up to, and we find that we are shaken by this new test, this new trial, this new form in which the Lord is allowing us to be assailed. Oh, blessed be God, the story is that we are not carried away; it is marvellous how we survive and come through. Why? - because of the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

What is the Spirit of Jesus Christ? Firstly, the Spirit of steadfastness. It is not our steadfastness, God knows. If it were left to us, we should have been carried away long ago, we would not be here. We are learning, yes, by our own failure often, by our own breakdown, our own weakness under trial and assault, we are learning Christ, we are discovering Christ, we are coming to the place more and more where we worship and say, 'Well, I never thought I would weather that one, it did not look as though I was going to get through that one, it looked very much as though that one was going to be the end of me, but I am coming through.' It is in that way that He is our foundation. I know foundation truth is His Deity and His atonement, that is the foundation for our faith, but somehow He Himself has got to come in and be my hope of glory, or else there is no hope at all. He has to be my hope of glory inside, be a sure foundation in my spirit, an unshakeable foundation, and, for those who have gone any distance with the Lord through the years, it is possible for them to say very humbly, 'Yes, I used to be caught along that line, I cannot be caught along that line now. There was a time when that would have shaken me terribly; thank God, I have got beyond that. I have not got beyond the point of being shaken, but not on that point, in that way.' We see that He has gradually brought us on in the matter of His own stability. Rock-likeness - is not that exactly what He meant when He said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church" and "Thou art Peter (a piece of rock)" (Matt. 16:18)? This was a prophecy concerning a weak man, that he would take his character from his Lord and become a part of Christ in that sense, that, by the Holy Spirit, what was true of Christ would be true of him.

Rock-like - oh, how much in these Psalms there is about the rock. "Thou art my rock." How often David used that word of his Lord. You see the foundation. Well, I said earlier, there is a sense in which we never get away from foundations. That is, God is always dealing with us on the matter of foundations to get us more and more settled, grounded, assured, confident. There is no end to that here. All the fresh shakings are to bring that about, all the fresh adversities are dealing with the matter of foundations. We never get away from them. We, in other words, never get away from testings and trials of faith,

and is not faith the very foundation of everything? Dr. Campbell Morgan published a little book on Job. Coming to the last chapters of the book of Job, those chapters in which the Lord takes up matters with Job and leads him out - "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4), 'What do you know about this and that?' He was led right out into the immense magnitude of God. And Dr. Morgan says God never touched upon Job's problem, He never tried to solve Job's problem for him or to answer Job's questions. How God dealt with Job's problems was to make Job sure of Himself, the Lord. And Dr. Morgan says that when Job came to the place where he was assured of God, his problem no longer existed, it had gone. Is that not it? The Lord does not answer our questions and explain our experiences and solve our problems directly. He is working to bring us to a place where we are so sure of Him that the problems are undercut. "His foundation is in the holy mountains." The Lord loves the gates of Zion. That is where the heart of the Lord is.

Now note: Abraham was called the friend of God. How was he the friend of God?

How did he become that which God loves more than all the dwellings of Jacob, where the heart of God was? Simply because, through testing and through trial, he imbibed the Spirit of His Son, Jesus Christ. Was not that the scene on Moriah? - the Spirit of Jesus Christ laying down His life, His soul. Yes, it was Christ in Abraham, through testing and trial, that made Abraham the friend of God and made it possible for God to say, "My friend, My delight, My beloved. More than all the dwellings of Jacob, these earthly things".

Chapter 2 - Unity in the Triumphant Life of Christ

"Walk about Zion, and go round about her; Number her towers ; Mark well her bulwarks; Consider her palaces: That ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death." (Ps. 48:12-14).

"For he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. 11:10).

"For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:11).

"His foundation is in the holy mountains. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon as among them that know me: Behold, Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia: This one was born there. Yea, of Zion it shall be said, This one and that one was born in her; and the Most High himself will establish her. The Lord will count, when he writeth up the peoples, This one was born there. Selah." (Ps. 87:1-6).

In our contemplation of Zion or of Christ, our first occupation is with foundations, and we were speaking about spiritual stability as wrought out in Christ while here on earth, under every kind of adversity, and then perfected, and brought to us in the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, to make us in that particular respect like Himself - steady, unmovable, reliable, quiet, confident, assured - a work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

This is an additional word on foundations in that connection of stability. It is obvious that we shall never get very far if we are unstable. Until the Lord has got us to the place where we are, to some real degree, grounded and settled, fixed and steady, He will not be able to put upon us the responsibility of His house. His house is not a material structure to be built upon material foundations. It is a spiritual thing. It is spiritual responsibility, spiritual ministry, spiritual life, spiritual fellowship, all that is represented in the House of God, and it cannot be placed upon our uncertainty, our uncertain souls, our wavering, our unreliable selfhood. It can only be placed upon what is of Christ in us in the sense of stability.

How important for carrying responsibility with and for the Lord is this matter of coming to the full assurance of faith, this confidence in God!

A Family Constituted by a Life Triumphant Over Death

Now we pass on to another aspect of the foundations, for the foundations themselves are manifold, although one. You know from the Revelation how manifold the foundations are: all manner of precious stones in the foundation, and the next thing that we shall consider for a little while in relation to foundations is that the foundation is a matter of a family constituted by life, and that life as the life which has conquered death. That is a rather vague statement, I know, but we can quickly explain. As we indicated in the last chapter that Abraham, who was looking for the city which has the foundations, had to go to Mount Moriah and there offer Isaac and receive him as from the dead, and God had said "In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Gen. 21:12). So it is quite clear that the family had to be out from a triumph over death, a life which had overcome death, which had vanquished death, and wherever you come to Scripture bearing upon the heavenly family, the divine family, you will find that death and resurrection are always in the near neighbourhood, very closely in touch. There has to be that which really is the mighty vanquishing of death in order to bring in this heavenly family so that it is constituted on that ground. And it is a family, every member of which, in the first place, possesses the life which has overcome death, and is learning to live by that life, and is called upon to prove right through the whole course of this earthly sojourn where death remains, to prove right on to the end the power of that life in terms of overcoming death. It is something into which we are called as our experience, as the ground to be proved and to be established. It is foundational that you and I not only possess that life in Christ, but continually prove its worth, prove its power, know it as the power of His resurrection. That is in the very foundation of things. If Abraham is the father of all them that believe, if he is the father of a spiritual and heavenly seed, then he is the foundation in principle. And if it was in Isaac that his seed should be called, it is quite clear that it was on Mount Moriah that in

principle the family was secured, secured by death being set aside and life triumphing. The same thing happened on Moriah so many years afterwards in the case of David. He had brought death upon the land; death stalked through the land, cutting down on the right hand and on the left many thousands through David's folly and sin. At length in the threshing floor of Ornan, Mount Moriah, the sacrifice was offered, the sword was sheathed, death was stayed, life triumphed, and it became the foundation of the house of God, the temple in which the supreme characteristic is life triumphant over death.

I was interested to notice that this last clause in Psalm 48 - "This God is our God for ever and ever: He will be our guide even unto death" - is not a correct translation. The correct translation is: "He will guide us across the gulf of death." Now "Walk about Zion", and the last thing is: "He will guide us across the gulf of death", not even unto death but over death, across death, the other side of death.

When we come to think of this in the light of the Lord Jesus, of course, again it is quite patent that it was in the hour of His resurrection that He said, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20:17). What He had said on that wise before - their Father and His Father - only became, in its full spiritual meaning and value, true in His resurrection. They were begotten again "unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). It is a family embodying this great reality of triumphant life, and it is concerning that that the apostle used those words which are very familiar to us in 2 Corinthians 2:15 - "We are a sweet savour of Christ unto God" and, leaving out the other details, we come to this: "a savour from life unto life". "We are a sweet savour of Christ unto God"; that is, we are bringing to God that which is of Christ which is precious and acceptable to Him, something in which He delights. It is Christ, and what is it? A savour of life unto life in others, that we are bringing the message and the power of this life triumphant over death to others. That is a sweet savour of Christ unto God. It is a family in the power of life.

God Builds on the Family

As to foundations, what is it God builds upon? What only can He build upon? The answer is quite definitely: God can only build upon life, and He can only build a family upon life. One of the very precious things, I think, of the Word of God, the divine truth, is just this: that God's foundation in spiritual essence is the family. We think of building by and on quite a lot of things, and it is here that so much confusion is brought about. We think of building in terms of truth, of doctrine, of knowledge, of light; we are all the time making those the criteria, and very often these things destroy the family spirit by misapprehension. We divide the Lord's people when we make truth and light a matter of relationship, of fellowship. Even unconsciously, almost unconsciously, springs up something divisive: superiority, difference in measure and apprehension. There comes about a phraseology: they have not seen! They have not got revelation! And the way in which it is said implies they belong to one category, and we to another. It is so subtle, and we are making the measure of our light the measure of our fellowship. The result? Well, quite without intention, the effect is division, is distance, is difference.

How can you and I and all the Lord's people make a good beginning in hope? Now, you can rule out a whole host of things and say, it cannot be that. We cannot make a good beginning with any hope if it has to be the same measure of light, everybody having the same apprehension of truth, the same interpretation. That cannot get us anywhere. But I venture to say that if we take this attitude and hold fast to it - We belong to one family, we are members of one family, we have one life, one Christ, within all of us - if we would hold to that, we would get a long way. You may not agree with me on quite a lot of things, (I expect you do not) but is that going to cause you to go away, wash your hands of me and have nothing to do with me? Then you are making things such as teaching, doctrine or interpretation the basis of relationship and fellowship. If you say, 'Well, I do not see eye to eye on certain matters, quite a number of matters, but we belong to one family, there is one foundational thing about us, we are members of the same family', that gives us a good starting point, and will at least form a

foundation for seeing just how far we can go together. Get the foundation right, see what the foundation is, and it is not that, that and that, but it is this: we share one life, we are members of one family, and in any family worth the name there is at least an effort made to get on together because they are a family. That is very elementary. It is hardly worth mentioning, but I see that it is just there that the test of the power of this life comes in. That is what I am getting at. We say we share one life. Yes, but what kind of a life is it? Is it abstract, just something that we have got in common, we call it eternal life? We have never defined it any more than that it is going to outlast this life and carry us on through eternity.

But there is something in the life that you and I share that has proved more than a match for all the disruptive forces of this universe. They were concentrated at the cross of the Lord Jesus, they were out to destroy, to disintegrate, to divide, to scatter. In His resurrection, that life proved more than a match for all those disruptive forces, and on the day of Pentecost, you see what that life did. They were all scattered in the night of His betrayal. On the day of Pentecost, they were together and it says of those who were saved that they continued steadfastly in fellowship. Something has happened. The disruptive, disintegrating forces of death and spiritual forces have been met. A beautiful family in fellowship has been born in His resurrection, and there is that in this life which is not just passive, abstract life; it has in it the power of unifying and overcoming disruption. It is the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Oh, how easy it would have been for a complete breakup of that band before His cross! How easy it would have been for them to have been alienated from Him and from one another, for the whole circle and group to have split up, divided and gone! How easy it would have been for Him to have just given them up as a hopeless proposition, wash His hands of them, saying, I can make nothing of these men, I can never bring them into any kind of oneness. There were all the makings of a situation like that, but "having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). He did not let them go. He did not give them up. He did not wash His hands of them. He did not say, They are impossible! He did not say, I have no room for So-and-so,

he is such an impossible person! He did not allow disintegration to come in. He held them together to Himself by His love to the end. The Spirit of Jesus Christ has come to work that same thing in you and in me so that we do not so easily let one another go because of our faults and imperfections and all that kind of thing which would alienate us, separate us, divide us. We are not so ready to let other people go because they do not see as we see. We are not so ready to let the Lord's people go because they have not got revelation. You see what I mean. No, the Spirit of Jesus Christ is the Spirit of the family, and the family is not just composed of those who see alike, who gather in a certain place and are occupied with a certain interpretation. No! The family is much larger than that. Anything in the nature of exclusivism is a violation of the family spirit, the family nature, of the Holy Spirit Himself. Where would any of us be if the Lord had treated us according to what we are in ourselves, according to the measure of our apprehension of His thoughts and His will, our likeness to Christ? What we owe to His infinite forbearance and longsuffering as with very wayward children, very slow-to-learn children - yes, and very sinning children!

What we owe to His longsuffering and forbearance! Do not let us make external things the basis of fellowship. The family is something altogether different from that. Do not let us make 'things' at all the foundation of relatedness. Let us recognize that it is Christ Who is the foundation and Christ in terms of love and life which have met the full force of hatred and of death and conquered. That life is in you and in me to prove its power and its value in the realm of all those works of evil along the line of division and death. The foundation is life, Christ as life, Christ as victorious over the work of death. You know that in nature, where death has taken place, disintegration will soon follow. Where life is, there is still hope - the basis of it holding together.

Chapter 3 - The Indestructibility of the Life of Christ

“For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11).

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Ps. 11:3).

We have had an immense amount of teaching on the greater magnitudes of divine counsels and purposes carrying us from eternity to eternity, and we are acquainted, at least acquainted, with very much in that realm that has to do with those purposes of God, but I have been greatly troubled because there is a very great deal that does not seem to come into line with that. Indeed, it seems to be inconsistent with it or a contradiction to it, even amongst those of us who are so closely in touch with it; and that under test, given circumstances, assaults of the enemy, deep trials, on-rushes of other forces, there is breakdown. There is a good deal that is not honouring to the Lord, very much otherwise, even where the teaching has been received for a long, long time and ought to be known. And this is not said just about others. We are all aware that a good deal of what we know of spiritual information has still to be inwrought, and we are far from being able to say that we are the living embodiment of all that. We find many weaknesses, we find a great deal that needs to be built up in ourselves. And in this realisation and having to do with so much, all this which falls so far short of what the Lord has given and is so contrary to it in so many cases and directions, my exercise of heart has been: What is wrong? Is it not after all a matter of foundations? Have we become so taken up with the superstructure of the divine purpose and truth and revelation that, as we said earlier, we have got a bit top-heavy, and there is something not quite right between the relationship of the superstructure and the foundation? That is my exercise, and that is what I feel to be the Lord’s intention, for this message. So far as I am concerned, that is my burden.

So we came to speak about our foundation, a fresh contemplation of Christ. We approached this through the symbolism, typology and metaphors of Jerusalem and Zion, but I have a feeling, a very bad feeling, that the metaphors and the symbolism obscure the immediate

practical value, and I want to get away from the framework right to the very heart of things and just say exactly what it is we feel the Lord is after. It is here in Christ Himself, the foundation other than which no man can lay, and if that foundation be destroyed, made of none effect, violated, what do the righteous do? Put in that form of question as to prospect, it is a cry of hopelessness. You can do nothing, nothing is possible. With all that you say and all that you teach, all that you give, it is all in vain, it is useless, if the foundations are in any way destroyed. You notice that the margin gives another tense to that which puts it rather in the past: What have the righteous accomplished after all that you have done? After all that you have done, what does it amount to if the foundations are destroyed? It is all in vain.

So again, it is very important that we should be quite sure that everything is really on the foundation and what that foundation really means, and this can be understood by looking at some of the meanings of foundations.

The Stability of Christ

In chapter one we were seeing Christ as the foundation and the great factor of stability. It is quite obvious to us all that if there is not real spiritual stability about us, if we are not people of certainty, of assurance, of spiritual confidence who can be relied upon spiritually, counted upon; if we are people who are of more than one mind, up and down and so on, there is something very much wrong with our foundation, our apprehension of Christ, our relationship with Christ. We saw how stability was wrought in Him to perfection; through all the storms, adversities, trials, sufferings; how sure, how steadfast He was, how unwavering. And then that the Spirit of Jesus Christ has come to work that into us progressively, and, while we will not reach final stability in one bound, it ought to be true that there is a very distinctly marked progressiveness in this matter, that whereas at one time we were easily moved, we are not easily moved about that now. Whereas before we could be shaken by certain things, those things do not shake us any longer. We have got past that. We may still have our

shakings by new forces and situations which we have not met before and we are going through new experiences where this rooting, this grounding, has still to take place. Nevertheless, we have moved on, and we are no longer the old flabby things that we once were, knocked about and carried about by all those more elementary forces of adversity.

There is much in the New Testament about steadfastness in Christ, being strong in the Lord, always abounding, unmovable, and unless that is true, we are not going to get through at all. All the building that we are putting up on top of that is going to collapse. We may know all about the eternal purpose, the counsels of God from eternity, the church, its great calling and destiny, and the whole thing will collapse like a pack of cards if underneath we are not rooted, grounded, settled, steadfast, unshakeable; that is, unless we are in oneness and keeping with the Foundation, the unshakeable Rock, and we are taking the rock-like character from Him Who is the rock foundation. And, while this is a call and a challenge, let it also be an encouragement, for we are going to be put through many mysterious inexplicable adversities and sufferings, things that we cannot explain, things that we cannot explain even from God's side. We cannot see God in them, we cannot see why God should allow it, how that can be consistent with God. Oh yes, that is not saying a wrong thing, it is true in the experience of many - the mystery of God's ways, altogether beyond finding out. We are going through things that could shake our very foundation, our faith, cause us to come to a standstill in the grip of an awful question. Now the Lord takes us that way, and the history of stability is the history of a tree which, having been planted, with every successive storm, finds for the moment its roots a bit loosened, things becoming a bit precarious, but its reaction to every such effect of storm is to root down deeper, and the mighty tree which cannot be moved by the greatest gale is simply the history, the sum of many shakings which have sent its roots deeper to lay hold more strongly. That is the way of the Lord with us. Yes, not one of us is beyond being terribly shaken, raising the greatest questions, wondering with the biggest 'Why?' But that is the way of being established. Do not, then, be discouraged if you pass through a time where everything for you is

an open question after all. Just remember that that is the time in which the Spirit of Christ has His opportunity for bringing that mighty rock-like stability of Christ into fuller expression as the very foundation of your life.

The Unifying Power of Triumphant Life

Then we went on with the unifying nature of foundations, unifying in the power of a life triumphant over death, and here again I stay for an extra word, because inconsistency with much revelation and much light and truth is found along this line very often. A very great deal of my time is taken up with clearing up messes created in relationships with other Christians by people who have got fuller light. They have got all the light of the Body, all the truth of the Body, the church, the oneness of Christ, and they are making messes everywhere between themselves and other Christians. Rather than it being a unifying thing, it is becoming a divisive thing. The truth is dividing as it should not divide. If we really have apprehended Christ aright, there should be a far greater measure of divine love in our hearts for all saints, not those who accept our particular viewpoint, our particular measure of revelation, what we stand for. It is a most pernicious thing. I am finding everywhere people who say, 'If you have not been to Honor Oak, you do not know anything!' See what effect that has on other people. It is divisive, and it is a wrong apprehension and a wrong application of truth. We stand here solidly for the oneness of all believers, though they have the remotest apprehension of Christ. If they are in Christ, we are one with them; if they are in Christ, they are one with us. On that we build; on that Christ builds. It is a family relationship that is foundational. The Father, the Son and the children. Do get rightly adjusted to foundations.

Triumphant Survival of That Which is Rightly Related to Christ

Now one extra word. It is this: the triumphant survival of these foundations or of that which is rightly related to the foundation - Christ. If we go to our type and illustration, Jerusalem, we shall have a very good example and illustration. Oh, what a history that city has of sieges and assaults, of being overrun and destroyed, and yet how persistently it survives! It comes up again and again. How it still remains a world factor, something that all the nations have got to reckon with. Just think of how many times Jerusalem has been overthrown, besieged, destroyed, occupied, possessed. Think of its long history of ups and downs. Today Jerusalem is just as much a factor in world affairs as ever it was. It still comes up. Now I am not going into the realm of prophecy. I am not coming down on to the earth level. Far too much is made of that. God has set this here only to point us to something else, and the history of Jerusalem is God's way of saying that His church, founded upon Christ, will survive, triumphantly survive, and even after all its conflicts, all its assaults, all its sieges, and all its seeming devastations, it will come up again and again, and at last will be there as the supreme factor to be reckoned with in this universe.

When you come to the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel you find Jerusalem devastated. Jerusalem has been laid waste. It is in that state that you find it in Nehemiah and Ezra. It is laid waste, devastated, and the people of the land are in exile. That is how Jerusalem is, that is how Zion is, that is how Israel is, and always remember that the terms Jerusalem and Zion are very often used of the people, not of the place. The daughter of Zion, the daughter of Jerusalem, is simply Israel. Come to Isaiah and Ezekiel and the city is in full view as though nothing has happened to it, it has not gone. "He... set me down upon a very high mountain, whereon was as it were the frame of a city" (Ezek. 40:2), and Isaiah is speaking so much in his later prophecies about the glorious survival of Jerusalem, of Zion. Oh, they have not let it go, they have not given it up. This thing for them is still intact. Because they knew, they believed, that this was something which God had raised up, God had instituted, God had constituted, and "whatsoever God does, it

shall be for ever” (Eccl. 3:14). Let happen what may, it will survive, triumphantly survive. Oh, now “if the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” The foundation for us is the imperishable, eternal stability of the Lord Jesus. Everything does rest upon whether the Lord Jesus is finally going to be vanquished. Is the Lord Jesus, after all, going out? Is God’s purpose going to be defeated? Our answer to that is the answer to our own inner questions.

What is the meaning of the Lord Jesus? He has no meaning apart from us. The very existence of Jesus Christ involves and implies the existence of His church. He cannot exist apart from us. All the meaning of the incarnation, all the meaning of His life here, all the meaning of His cross, all the meaning of His resurrection, ascension and exaltation is His church. He is only vindicated, the meaning can only be understood, in the light of His church. “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18). They shall not! You see, it is the eternal city because it is on an eternal foundation which is outside of time, outside of all that may happen.

We are going to survive if we are truly consistent with our foundation; if we are really rooted in Christ, we are going to survive, we will be found standing with Him at the last. When everything else that has sought to prevent it has gone down and been destroyed, out of the wreck we shall rise and stand with Him.

Sin Weakens Our Confidence in Triumphant Survival

I know what weakens that confidence, and it would be overlooking a very important point if I did not mention it. What weakens our confidence, in survival, coming out alright afterwards or at last, is the sense or the knowledge of our own sin, our own sinfulness and our own failure as Christians. Yes, as Christians we sin. We cannot call it anything else. We sin. If we were to analyse that, we could soon prove it. “Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). If you have the slightest question regarding God at any time, that is sin. It goes right to the root of everything. A little bit of pride, even spiritual pride, is sin. “Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord”

(Prov. 16:5). “The haughty He knows from afar” (Ps. 138:6). I am not going to analyse that question of sin. We sin and we sin in gross ways. We fail, we break down, we make mistakes, we show weakness, and we know in our hearts that the Spirit of God has smitten that thing, we know the Holy Spirit has condemned that in our lives, and we know how failing we are. And that is the thing which undermines our confidence, so often, that we shall not be cast off, we shall not be set aside, the Lord will not have done with us. The enemy encamps upon the ground of our failures to undercut this assurance and to weaken our confidence that we are going to triumph and come out alright. After all, all I can say to you in a comprehensive way is, go back to Zion, go back to Jerusalem, go back to David. Oh, how terrible! Think of David, a murderer, his hands stained with the blood of a man in order to get his wife, and other things, right up to that awful thing which culminated on Mount Moriah, the loss of tens of thousands of lives in Israel because of his self-will. Go back to the history of Jerusalem, see what the prophets have to say about Jerusalem, its iniquity, and think upon the mercy of God to David. “The sure mercies of David” (Isa. 55:3). What a phrase! The mercy of God, the grace of God, to David, to Jerusalem, to Zion! He has not washed His hands of us, He has not abandoned us, it is going to survive, not because of its goodness, not because we are so good and never fail and sin (this is no excusing of our sin), but by His infinite mercy and grace we are going to survive. We are founded upon the grace of God in Jesus Christ, not upon merit or worthiness or goodness in ourselves. He is the foundation, and He answers to God for every perfection that God requires in us. Let us get down on our foundations. That is the way in which we shall survive triumphantly. It is Christ, the solid Rock.

Chapter 4 - The Preciousness of Christ

"According to the grace of God which was given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder I laid a foundation; and another buildeth thereon. But let each man take heed how he buildeth thereon. For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire. Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye." (1 Cor. 3:10-17).

"Because it is contained in scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: And he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame. For you therefore that believe is the preciousness: but for such as disbelieve, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner. (1 Pet. 2:6-7).

"The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald." (Rev. 21:19).

My first word, reverting to the matter of Christ as the foundation, will be a corrective word. We must be very clear and very sure as to what it is we are here for, and what it is we are after. There may come to us great blessing and enrichment along the line of enlarging revelation of the things of the Lord. These may make a great impression upon us as being very wonderful, very rich, very full of suggestion, with the result that we find ourselves beginning to talk a great deal about these things that have come to our recognition, our knowledge, things that we would say have been shown to us or have been revealed to us. Slowly we are drawn into the way of speaking about truth and light and revelation in certain terms, with a certain phraseology and a

certain association, and before we know where we are, we have become people of a certain kind of teaching, a certain form of teaching, of teaching couched in certain phrases and a certain language, and we cannot but relate that to where we got it. Do you see what is happening? Some thing is being constituted, and that is accompanied by many perils, many dangers, and sooner or later we find it working out not so much to good as almost to bad. As we have said before, it can so easily become a divisive thing, a separating thing, a thing marking off lines of distinction between those who have this light and this knowledge and this kind of teaching, and those who have not got it. We can hardly avoid making distinctions, it is just the way of things.

Now, it is not unnecessary to say this. It is very necessary that we here today should look this straight and fully in the face and just get ourselves clear on the matter. Why are we here? Why are we here on the earth as Christians? What are we after? What is our business? What is Christianity all about from start to finish? For every fragment of light and revelation, from the most early beginnings through all the stages of enlargement and increase to however full a measure there may be at the end, has to do with one thing and one thing only, and if that is not the result of apprehension of truth, of knowledge, of light, teaching, then we are putting up a false building and everything again is in a realm of falsehood, artificiality, unreality. What is it that we are here for and that we are after?

Christians on the Earth to Reveal Christ

Well, as I see it, the Word of God has only one thing to say in answer to such a question, and that is the revelation, the manifestation, of Jesus Christ; that the Lord Jesus should be seen, should be manifested, should be here in very truth, that all can see Him, and all can know Him. You say, that is almost like an anticlimax to all that you have been leading up to. We expected something much more than that. No, that is just it, and, if I am not mistaken, the longer you go on as Christians, the older you get, the more you know, the more you come to dread any kind of teaching or any amount of teaching that does not result in

a very real knowledge and expression of the Lord Jesus. That is, you will feel more and more unable just to be content with teaching. Because of the serious demands and the intensifying difficulty, the growing pressure, the discipline, you will constantly and growingly feel: Yes, but what is it all about after all, where does it lead us to, what does this represent of value for life? And we know very well, do we not, that it is only the Lord Himself who can meet our need, who can really stand up to all that which comes upon us, the Lord Himself, and we have to come back constantly to this: Oh no, it is not the measure, the degree, the kind, the form, the nature, of our teaching, our truth, our way of speaking, our interpretation, our language. It is not that. It is the presence and the manifestation of the Lord Jesus commensurate with it all. Do these two things keep in even balance? Or are the ideas, thoughts, the great things of the mind something very wonderful in themselves and very wonderful as we contemplate them, yet are apart from the real everyday manifestation of the Lord and knowledge of the Lord? Are the people who think they have more light and more revelation than perhaps others have, really manifesting commensurately more of the Lord Jesus than others? That is the question. That is the deciding point and factor in everything. If you or I claim to have more light, more revelation - God forbid that we should ever make claims like that! - but if we should think that it is so, the proof and the value is - do people see more of Christ in us than others? For God never moves beyond his Son, He never moves to theories or teachings or doctrines or things that we call revelations. He only keeps within the compass of His living Son in manifestation. Do you understand what I have been trying to say? It is very simple and very foundational. It is the measure of the manifestation, the seen, recognized presence, of the Lord Jesus - whether His presence is liked or not, that is another matter. His presence may rouse a great deal of antagonism and hostility or it may answer to the quest of many hearts. The effect, one way or the other, is consequent upon His presence, His being recognized, and it is just how much we are manifesting of the Lord Jesus; after all our teachings and our conferences and our meetings, how much we are manifesting of the Lord Jesus, how much He is found in us. That is the deciding factor on

the value of everything. So the mark of testimony is not what we call 'the testimony', which for so many has come to mean a certain form and compass of teaching. No, the mark of testimony is Christ Himself manifested in a living way. That is the word of correction with which we begin. We are led by that to these foundations again, or to this foundation which is many-sided. The foundations in Revelation are many-sided, but the foundation is one, it is Christ in His many-sidedness. Here in the Revelation it is all manner of precious stones. Peter says, "For you therefore that believe is the preciousness" (1 Pet. 2:7). So the foundation which is to give its nature and character to everything that is put upon it, that is built upon it, that rests upon it, is the multiple preciousness of the Lord Jesus.

The Preciousness of Christ to the Father

Now, that preciousness is His preciousness to the Father, in the first place. "Behold, I (that is God speaking) lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious" (1 Pet. 2:6). If we were to investigate the preciousness of Christ to God of course we should come very clearly to the conclusion that what is precious to God is that which answers to His own nature, that without which God cannot do, that which is to Him the thing He just must have. It is precious because it is indispensable to God, and if we looked at that which is indispensable to God, we should find that it is the constituents of His own nature. By contrast, we should see what God hates, what He casts away, rejects as refuse, then we should see what is precious to God. We have said that pride is an abomination to God, something cast out. Then what is precious to God is meekness, humility. Peter says "the incorruptible apparel (ornament, A.V.) of a meek and quiet spirit... is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Pet. 3:4), precious. That is a virtue of Christ - meekness, a contrast to pride. So we should go on, but we are not going to take up these precious stones one by one.

Christ's Preciousness Ours Through Faith

We take up the word 'preciousness' and say, this being the foundation, that what Christ is to God in the satisfying of His own nature and all His divine and holy requirements becomes ours through faith. "For you... that believe is the preciousness", the manifestation of the beauties and the glories of the Lord Jesus. Oh, do try to free your mind from this being some sort of an address on a subject, do try to realize this, that this is not something for a meeting, for a conference or for our times of instruction in the Word! This is something that has to go with us tomorrow and the day after, where we are in homes, dealing with the everyday people in life, in business, out in the streets, in our journeys. It is there every day that the beauties, the excellencies of the Lord Jesus must be in manifestation. It is not what we preach, it is not that we are preachers giving subjects, but behind the preaching, behind the teaching, meeting with us, in the work day by day alongside of others, there is possible the discernment, the registration of Christ - though people may not know what it is. There is something of the beauty of the Lord our God resting upon us, something that speaks of Christ. It is no use our preaching about God's thought and desires if people find us wrangling and awkward and difficult and discontented and so on. It is Christ, the beauties of Christ, the preciousness of Christ to the Father which is the foundation, and all that is put on the foundation must correspond to it, otherwise it is going to be put in the fire, and there will be nothing left.

You see the glories of Christ. Let us ask the Lord to create in us a passionate ambition to express the Lord Jesus more than anything else. Not to preach great truths, or to be preachers, teachers, anything like that as such, but to express the Lord Jesus, that out of Himself, His own presence, His own measure, His own nature, our opportunities for preaching, if we are going to preach at all, will come, not because we can talk, but because it is known that we have something of the Lord. Do not let us live too much in the upper stories of the house of God. The house of God is one, and it has a basement and it has a kitchen. We do not want to always live up on the top flat, so heavenly, so spiritual, so abstract, so high up in truth that the practical things of

the kitchen are left unattended to. What would you say if you went into a house and were taken upstairs and shown a very glorious, wonderfully adorned upper flat, and then somehow you managed to get down to the kitchen and found the most awful filthy mess, out of all consistency with what you found upstairs. You say, there is something wrong here, this does not tally. There is the kitchen aspect of the spiritual life: all those practical, everyday, humdrum things where the beauty of the Lord must be seen, just as much as up there in the heavenlies in Christ. Do not let us live exclusively up there. We must live down here. That is what the Word of God does. That is what Paul did in his Ephesian letter. He wrote half of it about the heavenlies, then, without breaking it into chapters, he went straight on with his letter: "I... beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called", and then - husbands, wives, children, parents, masters, mistresses, servants - that is coming down to the kitchen, bringing the glory of heaven with you. It is a very important side of things. Preciousness must be found down here. "As in heaven, so on earth" (Matt. 6:10). Do not let us be people who are so occupied with high-up things that we think it beneath our dignity for such 'spiritual' (?) people to light the fire and wash the dishes and clean the room and so on. We may think that is not our job - we are more spiritual than that! There is nothing that displeases the Lord more than people coming to meetings and neglecting their homes, and thinking it is another realm. It is not; it is this realm. The highest thing that you can know is the manifestation of Christ, and that is perhaps more tested in those monotonous, everyday, humdrum things of standing in queues and all that sort of thing. Yes, but Christ is still there; not two worlds, the same world. Oh, forgive this, if it needs forgiving, for its simplicity. We must bring everything up to a high level. What I am trying to say is, do not be people of high ideas, great conceptions of truth, divorced from a practical presentation, expression, manifestation, of the Lord Jesus. Let it be Christ. That is the proof of the value of anything that we have. "For you that believe is the preciousness." Here is all this that is true of Christ. Go through John's Gospel again in this way. Here are all the things that He says He is. "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12). "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:14).

“I am the true vine” (John 15:1). “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). Here is the great I AM saying what He is. And then you notice how frequently He links with that a ‘shall’. The ‘shalls’ of the ‘I am’s’ in John’s Gospel are tremendously impressive - not always using the exact word, but in the context you will find the same conclusion. But here are some of the ‘shalls’. “I am the bread of life”; “he that eats this bread shall live for ever” (John 6:58). “I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness” (John 8:12). The link between what He is and ourselves is this, “he that believeth on me”. What I AM shall become true of him. “He that believeth on me shall never die” (John 11:26). “...shall not hunger” (John 6:35), shall never wander like sheep without a shepherd, he shall have a governing, controlling reality like a shepherd in his life. “Shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”. What I AM shall become true. “I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever lives and believes on Me shall never die.” What I AM is made good when you believe.

Now it is not what we are. I am dead; He is alive. I can never be other than dead, but He as the life can become life in me in my death, if only I believe. I am hungry, spiritually starved; He is bread, and I need never hunger; although I shall always hunger in myself, yet He will become the bread to supply me. Think of it! I need never hunger, I am down there in the country, isolated, getting no fellowship, no food; I am away in some place where there is no spiritual bread, and He says, “He that eats Me shall never hunger.” Is that dependent upon where I am, what my situation and circumstances are as to available spiritual meat? No, it is Himself, not place; it is Himself, not circumstances. But how can it be? - “He that believes”. Lord, I am hungry; You said that if I feed on You, I need not be hungry; now I take You at Your word, feed me with Yourself. Be very practical. I do not suggest experimenting with the Lord, but try it. You see the link between the preciousness: I am so unholy, I shall never be anything else; but He is holy, He satisfies God in the matter of righteousness and holiness.

The inclusive word of Peter on all the points (whatsoever it may be that He is that we are not that we need Him to be to us) the inclusive

word is “I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be put to shame.” Look at ourselves, what is going to be the end if we are left to ourselves? Well, there is no doubt about it, we can see the end - shame, failure - that is the end if it is left with us. “He that believes on Him shall not be put to shame.” Strange how Peter misquotes the passage from the Old Testament. The Old Testament that he is quoting here says, “He that believeth shall not be in haste” (Isa. 28:16). But is it a misquotation? Are you making haste? Why are you in such a hurry to save the situation, to do something about it? Why do you get worked up into this spirit of, ‘We must do something, if we don’t do something the whole thing is going to work out in disaster.’ Peter, under the Holy Spirit, just covers that and says, “not be put to shame”. You need not get excited and rush hither and thither in haste to try and save the situation. “He that believes on Him shall not be put to shame.” Unto you is the preciousness if you believe, and if you believe you will not be ashamed. You see the link of faith with what Christ is.

Christianity Not a Matter of our Soul-Life

Then here in the context of Paul’s word about Christ the foundation, he says some people build on that foundation a lot of rubbish, a lot of mixture. When we begin to investigate we never have to look very far to find out what the rubbish is. You do not have to make a list of things as to what Paul means by this variety of stuff: “gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble”. You have only to look at his letter and the immediate context and you will soon discover what he is saying. You Corinthians are trying to build up a Christianity firstly out of your own soul-life. “Now the natural (soulical) man...”. That is his word to the Corinthians, and when you look at 1 Corinthians what a lot of soulicalism there is: this wisdom of words, this wisdom of the world, these likes and these dislikes and preferences and partialities and antipathies, and then their jealousies. That is no good on this foundation. Do not bring your own soul-life into relationship with Christ; it will not tally and it will not go through, it will go up in smoke. Are you trying to make your Christianity a matter of how you feel? You

will have a composite kind of Christianity of so many varieties, nothing consistent at all, a perfect patchwork. Some patchworks are very clever, patchwork cushions and quilts, marvellous things, very clever, but you find no design, inconsistency, every colour under the sun. That is the soul-life in the realm of its feelings; one feeling today, another tomorrow. You are up or down temperamentally in your soul; there is nothing consistent. Are you going to put that on Christ? It will not go with Christ at all. Your soul-life in the realm of your mind: all the conflicting reasonings and arguments, attempts at getting some settled mental conclusion about things. You never will. When you think you have arrived at a very good logical conclusion about a matter, something will come along and upset the whole thing. Robert Browning said about an infidel that he beautifully got to the place where he had created a theory which satisfied him that there was no God at all, and then he said, a sunset upset it all. You never get through that way. Your soul in the realm of its mental exercises and conflicts will never tally with Christ. And as for our own soul-will, strength to do, we may feel very strong, we are never going again to be caught like that, never going down that street again! It is not long before we are there. Oh, how ashamed our souls make us! How ashamed we have been because of the instability of our feelings or our wills or our thoughts. Ashamed! Ashamed! Ashamed! Our souls are making fools of us all the time. "He that believes on Him shall not be put to shame." Paul says that this soul-life business must not come on Christ. It is a contradiction. It is not what you are, it is what Christ is.

When you cannot see and understand and work it out mentally, when you cannot feel anything, no feelings at all, or when they are very bad feelings - that is one realm, that is just what we are. Christ is not that, and we have at such times to say, Lord, this is my infirmity, this is how I am, but you are other; I transfer my faith to you from myself and from these things. Christ is the foundation, and all that we build on the foundation has to be Christ Himself. He is not only the foundation, but He is the whole building in every part.

I have only indicated what I mean. It is a real desire that we should be more and more taken up with the Lord Jesus, not with teachings, truths as such. Thank God for every bit of revelation that comes for

our deliverance and help, but do not let us regard the revelation as something in itself and begin to make that the means of propaganda. No, it is the Lord that comes through it, becomes more to us by it, the Lord Himself. If we do not see the Lord in everything, there is something wrong, and it will miscarry if it is not the Lord. So do not let us speak about this truth or that, about the Body, the church, one thing or another, but the Lord. There is no church but Jesus Christ Himself. There is no Body but Jesus Christ Himself. There is nothing but Himself. He is all and in all. "Unto you that believe is the preciousness." Let us be sure that we are not trying to build up something, a Christianity or a church, or a movement or anything that is simply composed of truths and doctrines and teachings, interpretations and so on, but that it is really Christ in us, the hope of glory.

Chapter 5 - The Glory of Divine Initiation

“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God” (Ps. 87:3).

“Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God” (Heb. 12:22).

“Unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever” (Eph. 3:21).

We have been walking about Zion in these messages, taking account of some of the aspects of this heavenly spiritual seed which is Christ and His own.

Now we come to that which is gathered into the one word - ‘glory’, the glory of Christ and of His own people. Now a very simple survey of the New Testament with that word ‘glory’ in mind - and you will only have to glance down the columns of a concordance under that word - will make a tremendous impression. The impression will be that this idea of glory, this matter of glory, seems to govern everything.

Glory Governs Everything

If you read the Gospels regarding the life of the Lord Jesus here on the earth, you will be impressed that in His life the dominant note and the motive of everything was the glory of God, that glory manifested in Himself and handed on to His disciples, His followers, His church. Anyone familiar with the New Testament or with the Gospels will find Scriptures, statements, leaping up to their memories at once. “We beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), and that is a comprehensive statement, for undoubtedly John, writing so very many years after the passing of the Lord Jesus to heaven and the conclusion of all His earthly life, was taking the sum of things. Perhaps he was remembering one particular point in His transfiguration of which both he and Peter, who were eyewitnesses, spoke as of beholding His glory then, yet covering those works of His from the beginning of his signs in Cana of Galilee, when he manifested His glory (John 2:11); covering all His works, covering all His movements, covering all His doings and His refusal to do, and His movements and His refusing to be moved, showing that the motive

of everything in the life of the Lord Jesus was the glory of God, and that manifested in Himself.

Think about it. Recall the words: glory, glorify, glorified. How often they occur in connection with His time down here. And, although the cross seemed to be so very much other than fraught with glory, the undergirding and overriding thing of the cross and the work accomplished thereon and thereby is glory. On the one hand, the removal of all that could never be to the glory of God, the removal of the man, the kind of man, the old Adam, order of man, the removal of all the sin and its consequences, the whole mighty work of atonement, all to put out of the way what could never be to the glory of God and never be glorified, the ground that was entirely against glory; and, on the other hand, in resurrection triumph, to bring in the ground for glory, it is glory that governs the work of the cross.

And then again it is the governing idea of all the apostles in the second section, coming in with the Acts. It is the spirit of glory that comes in in Acts 2, the Spirit of the glorified One, and He comes in in glory. The church was filled with glory, the church was brought in in glory, because Christ had been glorified, and that was the note, the triumphant note, of the church and of the preaching. This One Whom they had crucified, God had glorified. All the instruction, all the admonition, all the exhortation, all the warning, and all the ministry of consolation in the letters of the apostles has to do with this one matter of glory.

“Our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). It is glory that is there in the ministry of consolation, explaining the trial. If it is warning, it has to do with losing the on-high calling, losing the glory. And so the second great section of the New Testament is really dominated by this one thought of glory. We make the general statement and come to it more particularly as we go on.

And what can we say about the book of the Revelation? It is introduced with a presentation of the glorified and glorious Lord, and the doxology so soon breaks out. “Unto Him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood... to Him be the glory” (Rev. 1:5). And from that introduction, the presentation of the glorious Lord, right

through, the one thing that is governing all is the issue of glory. All has to be dealt with, the nations, the forces of evil, because God is going to fill His universe with His glory, and all that is not according to glory must be dealt with and got rid of, and at last that book of the Revelation emerges in the unveiling of the glorious city. It is only, in other words, the church in union with Christ - "having the glory of God" (Rev. 21:11). Well, do we need to stay to gather more evidence that the New Testament, at least, is governed by this thought of glory? Now, that whole matter in general is divided into three main divisions. Firstly, there is the glory in divine initiation. Secondly, the glory in hidden operation. Thirdly, the glory in final manifestation. I think that sums up the matter so far as the Word of God is concerned. Of course, there is a vast amount of detail, but in general that is what it amounts to.

Glory in Divine Initiation

We shall now occupy ourselves with the first of those three: glory in divine initiation. I think two outstanding instances can be cited as sufficient indication. We take the birth of the Lord Jesus and then the birth of the church. There are many other initiations in the Bible, in the Old Testament and in the New. We might say there are as many divine initiations as there are saints. And we find that they are all with glory.

Here we have these two. The divine initiation marked by the incarnation, the coming into flesh and into this world of the Son of God, the Son of Man. We ought to read the story again in Luke chapter 2, but it is hardly necessary.

The angel and his announcement, and then suddenly with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host singing, praising and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom He is well pleased" (Luke 2:14). It was a scene of glory, an occasion of glory, tumultuous glory in heaven breaking through into this world.

Something in a spiritual way happened like that on the day of Pentecost. We can only deduce that the ascension of the Lord Jesus was a wonderful scene in heaven. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and

be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: And the King of glory will come in. Who is the King of glory?" (Ps. 24:7-8). It is a scene of ecstasy in heaven, the receiving up - not just the ascending up, but the receiving up of the Lord of glory, the Prince of glory, and out of heaven's joy, heaven's tumultuous joy, the Holy Spirit came forth, and if what happened expresses one thing here on the earth in the church, it does express joy, it does speak of glory. Oh, what a day that was when the church was born out of the heavenly glory and filled with that glory!

Glory a Matter of Joy, Peace and Satisfaction

The initiation in both cases was with glory. There is no doubt about it, God's beginnings, God's own beginnings, are always in glory. And glory, if you break it up, if you look at it through the prism, is a matter of joy. It is not just some blaze of external light. It is joy, strange, often inexplicable joy. It is peace: discord ceases, strain departs, there is a wonderful sense of everything being all right. There is peace and satisfaction. An answer has been given to all that we have felt in our deepest being needed to be, ought to be, for the vindication of God, for the justification of God, for the explanation of heart questions and problems. When God acts, your problems cease, your questionings go out in satisfaction. You are satisfied God has done this, that is all there is to it. How He has done it, that does not matter; by what means, sometimes so simple. We thought it was going to mean a mountain-removing miracle, and just quietly it has taken place. Satisfaction has entered into our hearts. We are not like Naaman of old - I thought at least He would have come out and done some extraordinary thing! "Are not Abanah and Pharpar the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" (2 Kings 5:12), demanding something very extraordinary, No, it is just in this simple way God does it, and you are satisfied. When God does a thing, it is like that. That is the essence of the glory of God, that you are satisfied; and God's beginnings, God's initiations, are in glory in that sense, without anything of the external to account for it.

Take the birth of the Lord Jesus, that great initiation of God. Well, look at the conditions, look at the circumstances, look at the surroundings,

look at everything naturally. No palace, no earthly comforts, no accompaniments of those sovereign activities of God which are according to men's ideas that everything should be just so beautifully and wonderfully arranged on the earth side - no, everything to the contrary. From the earth standpoint: weakness, poverty, want, discomfort, and yet it is in glory; there is no contradiction of the divine glory. Heaven is satisfied, heaven is rapturous in glory, and anyone who has any real touch with that is quite satisfied. There is something here that is deeper and more wonderful than anything external. Is it not like that every time the Lord Jesus has a new birth? Forgive me putting it that way. Was it not like that when He was born in your heart and in mine? Well, on the outside, things did not seem very different. The home was the same, the business place was the same, the world was the same, the circumstances did not change a bit, but somehow there was a glory inside: joy, peace, satisfaction, glory. Perhaps some of you say, I was brought up in a Christian home, there was no great crisis in my experience, I seemed to move quite naturally into the Christian life. Have you never since in your spiritual history had an experience of the Lord, the Lord coming into your life, the Lord moving in in some way, in this way? The strain went out, the fret went out, the shame went out, the discontent went out, the disappointment went out. You were at peace, great joy flooded in, you were satisfied. I think we can all speak of that, and that more than once. God's new beginnings are always in glory. It was with His Son, and - let me put it in this way again - every birth of His Son in a life or in a place is accompanied with these tokens of glory.

The Essence of Divine Glory

But what is the essence of this glory? What was the essence of that glory on the day when Jesus was born in Bethlehem? Now here you have to mark very carefully a discrimination, because it is just here that people go wrong and get into difficulties. The essence of the glory of Christ's birth at Bethlehem, as is the essence of glory in every event and every fresh movement of God, was and is this: God Himself having brought in that which is to His pleasure. God has introduced and

brought in that which is to His pleasure, and the Lord Jesus is the object of the Father's pleasure. If He is not there, there is nothing to the Father's pleasure. When He is there, there is something present which is to the pleasure of the Father. The Father's pleasure, satisfaction and joy is centred in His Son and where His Son is. Now the peril into which so many have fallen is that they have taken the effects of that rather than the cause. The effects - yes, joy and peace and satisfaction and deeply moved emotions, gratification and pleasure, and then, taking the effects, the feelings, the results, they have tried to perpetuate them. They have been afraid that they might go, they get into a state of fear - how long will this last? Shall I wake up in the morning and find it all gone? Will it be amongst those nine days' wonders? And so they have strained after holding and maintaining the effects, and missed the basic reality.

The basic reality is Christ and Christ is God's delight and God's pleasure; not the feelings, but the fact. How many of you are trying to recover the feelings, or to hold on to the feelings, to have the feelings, the effects; reaching out for some abstract thing that you call glory? That is the mistake. God's facts remain. The feelings may change - that is the second part of this whole matter of glory - the hidden operations of glory, that touches another realm altogether. We are occupied with God's initiations. But when God gets His Son in, He has not just got a set of emotions, a lot of feelings; He has got a mighty eternal reality, the very object of divine glory. And Christ in you is the hope of glory (Col. 1:27), not your feelings about it, but the mighty, basic reality. God has that which is to his pleasure. His pleasure is not in us, in what we are, however we feel. I do not believe that the Lord is any more pleased and satisfied with us when we are having an ecstatic time than He is when we are having a most miserable time. That is just the variableness of our own soul life. We can get up or we can get down; God's pleasure and satisfaction is centred in His Son, and He wants us to have our hold of faith upon His mighty fact and not the variableness of our own reactions. No, God's initiation is just this: that God has brought in, where there never was before, that which is to His satisfaction. It is Christ and not first of all the effects of Christ. Oh, the effects are there, praise God for that, but you know so often the

effects are the elementary aspect of things, the infant period. You go out into maturity, and in maturity you will have to learn to live on Christ, not on feelings.

God's Initiations His Basis for Future Operations

Secondly, God, having obtained that which is to His pleasure, His initiations, His beginnings are His standards, and His basis for all future operation. Everything afterwards will be in accordance with the beginning, the initiation. I don't mean that for ever and always there will be that conscious ecstasy, that sense of glory. But I do mean this, that God, having obtained it, introduced that which is to His satisfaction, the seat and centre of His glory. And He will be working for ever after to make that which is in His Son true in us so that we are, in conformity to His Son, on the way to glory ourselves, progressive glory by that which satisfies God being wrought into us so that the glory is spreading out and taking hold, and we are coming nearer and nearer to that of which the Word speaks, "God... called you unto his eternal glory" (1 Pet. 5:10). The beginnings of God govern the end. The end is to correspond to the beginning, but even in greater measure. The beginnings may be comparatively small. Bethlehem in a sense is small, is little; Christ there is limited; and yet all the fulness of the glory is opened up in that smallness, in that littleness. In the end, it will not be additional glory. It will be that glory which has expanded and filled the universe. God is working according to His beginnings to have His end corresponding therewith. So the beginnings of God are the basis of all God's activities. There will be that in the end which is glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever (Eph. 3:21).

This is practical. If the Lord has done something, has introduced something of Himself, of His Christ, in us personally and individually in this earth, as a work of His, that beginning has been God's, and it has come in with these accompanying manifestations of deep joy and gratification. And oh, how blessed and precious a thing it is to have the assurance that this is of God, this is not of man, the Lord did this. How assuring and heart satisfying it is to have that realisation! And when

God does that in a life that individual is able to say, 'I did not choose Him but He chose me, the initiative was with God. It was not my doing, it was the Lord's doing; if it had not been for the Lord I would never be here today.' Many can say that all the way along what He did at the beginning He has continued to do. I have wandered, yea fallen, but I am here today because God started this thing, and it is going on because it started in glory and glory is not a matter of the variability of my nature, not at all to do with me. It is His Son, He planted His Son and He has worked and is working all the way through my life on the ground of Christ, not on my ground at all. When I come at last to the fulness of that glory to which He has called me I shall have to say: He did it, it was the Lord's doing, not mine; He did it!

God is working on the basis of His initiation. I believe that there is a great deal of very profound truth in the New Testament gathered into that, upon which we will not embark. May it not be that the whole of those deep things of God gathered into Paul's words in Ephesians 1:4 about being chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and in Romans 8:29, "whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son", (which takes us right out of time and all that belongs to time, right out of this human life here and all that belongs to it, and places us right there on the Rock in eternity) that it is all gathered into this, that God has taken the initiative and is working according to His initiating? I am not ruling out our response and all that is incumbent upon us to go on, to be steadfast - that is another side. But all our effort, our determination, would be futile if God had not started this thing Himself and laid the foundation for it. If our obedience, our compliance, our response, our setting of our hearts to go on with God, if all that were not upon a basis that God has laid down, how in vain it would be; but it is simply our coming to the Rock. Thank God, the Rock is there and the Rock is Christ. He has done it, and so, with our deviations, we come back. With our failures, we rise again. We are ashamed and grieved, we suffer discipline, but we are not cast off. God started this, and that is glory; it is the glory of His grace.

My point is that God is working according to His beginnings. His beginnings are His basis for all His further activities right on to the

end, and because Christ is the beginning, the end will be Christ, and the end is Christ because Christ was the beginning. God, then, has commenced with us in glory. How many of us are able to say, Yes, I know something about that. I know at a certain point at the beginning something happened, and the effects of that were great joy, great peace, a great sense of satisfaction. It was just glory. I can only use that word about it, it was glory. I have many times made this terrible mistake of trying to make everything of the effects, the nice feelings that I had then, and I have forgotten the fact of Christ, but I know something of the glory, and every time that the Lord is able to get something more of His Son into our lives that thing happens again. Here is a controversy that the Lord may have with us or we may have with the Lord. We are held up because of some unsettled question. There is a dispute going on between the Holy Spirit and ourselves. We are delaying, we are disobedient, we are slow, we are not girding ourselves to the battle. We have no peace, no rest, no satisfaction, our lives are torn, the glory goes out of our face, out of our testimony. Then the day comes when, under the Holy Spirit's persistent, urgent constraint, we say, I am going to have this thing settled! We go in and we shut the door and say, This is an end of this, something has to happen.

We get before the Lord, and there may be a battle, a bitter battle, but we get through. The Lord is given His place, we step aside, our wills, our desires, whatever may be involved, we hand up to the Lord and say: That is gone, I have finished; now Lord Your will, Your way. When we get through, the glory is back again. Yes, joy, peace, satisfaction. Every bringing in anew or in greater fulness of the Lord Jesus over a matter is accompanied by glory. If only we knew how much glory we are forfeiting by allowing the struggle to go on so long, by not coming to grips with the situation! Oh, we are robbing ourselves of the glory - and we all do it. We are slow to learn.

But here are God's facts, that it is in His Son and His Son having His place, that glory dwells upon that, and so we close on that note. If the Lord can only have a full place for His Son, the measure of glory in our hearts will be full too. Circumstances may not change at all. You may still be up against the hardships, the difficulties of your way and place

and work. Things may not change, people may not change and work may not change and place may not change, but the inside is different. And may it not be - one does not want to be exacting - that the Lord does not do anything on the outside until He has that position on the inside, that delay is because we have not got to the place of glorying in infirmities. We want to get glory by deliverance from them; we are not glorying in them. Well, let us ask the Lord about it, but keep in view that God's thought is glory and all His beginnings, whether it be that first phase of His beginnings, or those beginnings of so many after-phases, when He is beginning a new phase and yet a new phase and still a further phase, (how many new beginnings we have had - not going right back, but as it were a new phase, a new beginning), all God's beginnings where He gets what He wants for His Son are fraught with glory. The Lord bring us into the glory and the glory into us, the glory which is Christ. "Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God." "You have come to mount Zion, and to the city of the living God." "Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen."

Chapter 6 - The Glory in Hidden Operation

“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God” (Ps. 87:3).

“Ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God” (Heb. 12:22).

“Unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever” (Eph. 3:21).

“...to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6).

“...to the end that we should be unto the praise of His glory, we who had before hoped in Christ” (Eph. 1:12).

Our occupation has been with features of Zion; in other words, features of Christ transmitted to and wrought into His own people. Now we have come to the glories of Zion, or to glory in relation to Zion. We saw in the last chapter that this matter of glory has three main aspects - firstly, glory in the divine initiations; secondly, the glory in hidden operation; thirdly, the glory in final manifestation.

In Christ's Earthly Life the Glory Largely Hidden

We pass now to the second aspect: glory in hidden operation. And yet that wants qualifying, for it is only hidden here. Only heaven sees it, but here the glory is largely hidden. Have you ever wondered what the shepherds thought and what the magi thought and what the other people thought who knew of the coming of the Lord Jesus with heaven's glory a few months afterwards, or a few years afterwards? Of course, we do not know whether the shepherds took pains to keep track of that babe. The babe went from Bethlehem, moved from this point to that, grew up through thirty years mainly in seclusion and as year after year passed it is very probable that those shepherds said: ‘That was a very wonderful night. It seemed to be very portentous of marvellous things, but what has happened to it all?’ Those from the East might well have asked a similar question: ‘Well, we were not mistaken, there was a star right enough, we found the place indicated and the child. We opened our treasure and we made our declaration as to this being the King - but what has happened to Him, we have

heard nothing about Him for thirty years?’ It may be a work of imagination, but even if it is only that, it helps us to see the point that not only through the thirty years but through the thirty-three and a half years all that glory was hidden, or mainly hidden, except for something here and there being indicative of it, like a miracle when He showed forth His glory, or on the one and only occasion when it was literal on the Mount of Transfiguration. But for these occasional intimations, the glory was not seen by men; it was hidden. It had not departed, there was no less glory there than at the beginning, but it was hidden. It was not recognized, it was not discerned, not perceived by the world and by the great majority of those in touch with Him; the glory had gone in.

Heaven Was Able to See the Glory

But heaven was very interested, and hell was very interested. The interest which heaven had shown in the birth was maintained. After the conflict in the wilderness forty days and forty nights, angels came and ministered unto Him. Yes, angels are watching, they know all that is happening, they are tremendously interested. Angels had proclaimed, “Glory in the highest!” The thing had not disappeared with them; they are still seeing, watching. Not once nor twice do angels come in, and in the end there are the angels at the tomb. They are always in attendance, they are always concerned with this. Heaven sees what no one else sees. Heaven knows what no one else knows. Heaven is watching, taking account.

What did heaven see? Of what was heaven taking account? The glory! But how?

You see, now glory was working in a hidden way; heaven was able to see that glory in numerous ways; heaven was concerned about that glory. Every fresh temptation, every fresh trial, every fresh snare and trap set for Him, every fresh suffering that came upon Him, every new ordeal, every new crisis, every point at which one of two things might happen: a triumph or a failure, at every point heaven was watching to see how the glory won, to see how the glory would come out, how the glory would triumph. The glory became something very much more inward, more real, yes, more crucial than just rays of a halo of light. It

was something now that was a power, that was a determining factor. I venture to say that the whole issue of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus was whether the glory would remain or whether the glory could be taken away, could be veiled, whether there could happen with Him what happened with Jerusalem of old when, because of breakdown and failure, the prophets saw the glory go up from Jerusalem and remove far away. You may feel that you have ground for questioning my theology, but if you will look closely, you will see there is some truth in this. It is the question of how the glory is going to be manifested and maintained.

It was working inwardly, it was working secretly, it was being challenged and tested in His inward life. The whole thing is summed up in this, that the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration with the glory full and manifested, was not just mechanically or automatically glorified. It was because of the triumph of His faith right up to that point, He Who, instead of the joy set before Him, came down, endured the cross and despised the shame. That glorifying of the Lord Jesus was because He had reached such a point of triumphant moral perfection and it was that that blazed forth then. It was the condition and state of His inner life with God that came out on the Mount of Transfiguration. That is the basis of all glorifying, as we shall see.

The Glory Hidden in the Church

Let us revert. The glory has become hidden. Passing to the church, what a day the day of Pentecost was! Again the heavens were rent, again the glory came down, again it was declared, it was proclaimed. How long did it last like that? I think it was not very long before the glory became hidden. I do not mean the glory departed, that it was no longer there, but the day of Pentecost was not perpetuated in its outward features for very long. The church passed on, and many might have asked the question: Well, what about that tremendously promising beginning? What about all that on the day of Pentecost? Where is it? Things have changed. It is not like that now, we do not see that kind of thing. The features of what happened are not now so

discernible. A change has come over the church, it has gone inward and it has become hidden. Tell me, as the world looks on the church can it see the glory in such terms as I mean on the night of Christ's birth and on the day of Pentecost? Is the world able to see that kind of external manifest glory? No! There is glory to be seen if it had eyes, but it does not see, and to the world it is hidden. Is that not true of every individual Christian?

As we said earlier, the initiations of God in the individual life are with glory. In our conversion, in our new birth, we come to the Lord, and there are all the marks of glory - joy, peace and satisfaction. The only word that expresses those early days of the Christian life is glory. But it just does not go on like that. Thank God if it does go on unbrokenly throughout life. I am not saying that there is never any trace of that, but it does not normally continue just like that. Things change and there arise all the problems and questions and all the ground for enemy assault and accusation. He will tell us it was all an illusion, an emotion, all false; or that we have sinned and grieved the Holy Spirit and so on, because things change. The glory has not departed because the glory is Christ. But something has happened. The glory has become hidden. It is there, it is active, operative, but it is operative in a hidden way.

Glory Operating in Terms of Grace

How is the glory operating now in that in-between phase between the initiation in glory and the consummation which is to be? The glory is here, but how is it operating? Well, our extra passages at the beginning of this chapter just show us how in the hidden operations of glory, it is in terms of grace. "The glory of his grace". Grace is the basis of the glory. Glory is bound up with grace. You noticed as we read in Ephesians - "to the praise of the glory of His grace". "He chose us in Him... having foreordained us unto adoption as sons... to the praise of the glory of His grace... to the end that we should be unto the praise of His glory", glory operating in terms of grace.

Grace as a Divine Attitude Towards Us

As I look at this matter of grace in the New Testament, I find again that it is divided into three aspects. Firstly, grace as a divine attitude towards us. That is mainly what we think of when we speak of grace, the grace of God - God's beneficent attitude towards us. Here we are out of our depth. That grace of God as an attitude towards us carries us altogether beyond our powers of coping with it. "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." He "foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself" (Eph. 1:5). There is a Scripture which says, "In thy book all my members were written... when as yet there was none of them" (Ps. 139:16 A.V.). Here am I coming to this world, here are men and women coming to this world, and all their members were already in his book, and they are allowed to fall into the most ghastly and awful sin, to do things like David did. Perhaps some of you will rule him out dispensationally, but the principle you cannot rule out. To do things such as Peter did, denying his Lord with oaths and curses three times over, but you cannot rule him out dispensationally. To do things such as Saul of Tarsus did, giving consent to the death by stoning of that young man in whose very face the glory of Christ was manifested, and persecuting "this way" unto the death, determined to exterminate the last remnant and residue of Jesus Christ in the earth. Need we follow it up? What about ourselves - the sin, the failure, the breakdown, the reproach that you and I have brought upon our Lord - and He knew all that would happen before He gave us a body, and when He wrote our members in His book and thus gave us a body in intention, before we had one? He knew that would happen, what we would do, the kind of life we would live. He knew it all. He knew all the sum of Israel's defection, He knew that Israel would one day turn from Him, repudiate Him and burn incense to idols and cause their sons to pass through the fire in the worship of Moloch. He knew it all, and He chose Israel and He wrote Israel down in His book before Israel was.

What is the explanation of all this? We are out of our depths, we cannot explain that, we cannot understand that. Why should God have chosen me in Christ, you in Christ, and then let us, by giving us a body,

do what we have done and go the way we have gone and dishonour Him? These are problems beyond our mentality, our mental powers. There is one answer in the Bible; here we feel our knees giving way. We just go down, collapse, "...that we should be unto the praise of His glory, we who had before hoped in Christ". Is there not glory there, but it is working inwardly? Who sees that but heaven and hell? What does the world see of it? There may be some kind of traces of the work of divine grace, but the world cannot appreciate the grace of God, it does not see the glory. It takes Christ to know the grace of God, and therefore it takes Christ to glorify God, and therefore it is glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations forever. Yes, it is glory in terms of grace in the divine attitude towards us. We cannot explain it. Why did He choose you and me? Ask yourself. Are any of you prepared to start on the line of: I know why He chose me, He had a good reason for choosing me, there was that about me which justified His choosing me? If you are, you know nothing of the grace of God, and you can bring no glory to God. The more you are ready to say that it is by this attitude of God towards me in grace, the more you are able to say it from your heart, the more you ought to be glorifying God.

Is it not strange how our miserable, wretched, corrupt, failing selves are so often made by us the means of hiding His glory rather than manifesting it? We are keeping it in view, we are talking about our wretched selves, keeping our miserable selves in view instead of all the time saying, Oh, the grace of God in my case is a marvellous thing - glorifying the grace of God. That is the other side. God help us to do it more! Glory in terms of grace. So far as the divine attitude towards us is concerned, inexplicable, unfathomable, but for that very reason so wonderful.

Grace as Divine Power

Then I find that grace in the New Testament is spoken of in another category, in another realm, another aspect, and that is grace as divine power. Not only the divine favour or attitude, but divine power. Paul speaks of his weakness, his infirmity, and how he brought that before

the Lord and besought the Lord about this infirmity, this weakness, this thing that caused him so much trouble and distress, and the Lord did not say anything about that, but He said, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor. 12:9). And there is a lot in the New Testament about grace as vital force, as divine power.

God’s Grace Toward Us Demands Self-exposure

Do you see that these aspects all make a certain demand? If it is grace as a divine attitude towards us, then there is demanded a self-exposure. We shall never appreciate that attitude of God until we ourselves are exposed. Why it is, then, that the course of the Christian life, from one standpoint is such a history of uncovering ourselves, laying us bare, bringing up from the depths the corruption that is in us, making us more and more ready to say, “In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing” (Rom. 7:18)? Why is God trying all the time to condemn us and bring up from the depths the ground of condemnation? Is He trying to make us miserable with our own sin? No, self-exposure is demanded in order that we shall all the more glory in that attitude of God towards us. He says, You see what is true of you; nevertheless, I love you. You see how much depth of iniquity there is in you; nevertheless, My attitude is one of grace to you. You see what you are capable of; nevertheless, I do not turn My face from you; My face is towards you, My attitude is one of infinite compassion, infinite forbearance. My attitude is still the attitude of grace. Self-exposure is demanded and when it becomes a matter of grace in the form of divine power, another demand is made, and that is the demand of trial, affliction and suffering.

Grace as Divine Power Demands Suffering

There are many sufferings which are the lot of believers which they would never have were they not believers. Afflictions and trials are our portion simply because we are the Lord’s, that He has bought us and has purchased and possessed us, and so we suffer and are tried and afflicted. We know weakness and we know adversity and we

know what it means to come to the end of our wits and our tether, and everything, and that is the demand in order to know the glory of God in terms of grace. I wish I could always believe that. I wish I could keep that before me like crystal in that dark hour, that terrible time of affliction.

But I see it in the New Testament, I see it in these men, I see it in the Lord Jesus. I see the glory now is working in a hidden way like this. Oh, these people are going through it, but the grace of God is very wonderful, the grace of God is constantly lifting them up, bringing them back and keeping them going in spite of everything. You think they have gone this time but up they come again. There is the ubiquitous cork ever bobbing up again; grace as a vital force, grace as divine power.

Look at the Lord Jesus and see if it is not true. Look at the church and see if it is not true. Look into your own history and heart and see if it is not true. Glory is like that. It is a very different idea from angels singing a heavenly song about glory. It is something gone in, gone under. It is a mighty subterranean thing at work, and it is going to see us through.

Grace a Matter of Divine Nature

Then the third aspect of grace is in connection with the divine nature. I find that there are things said about grace being a matter of what we would call graciousness, that is, the coming out of divine nature and likeness under provocation. What a pity the translators were not consistent in translating those words of Peter - "if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye shall take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1 Pet. 2:20). Everywhere else, the word "acceptable" is translated "grace", "This is grace with God." If ye suffer when ye do well, if you are buffeted when you do well, and take it patiently, this is grace with God - and you tell me that is not glory?! When you are suffering wrongfully, maligned, misrepresented, persecuted, assailed, and you know quite well that there is no ground for it in truth; it is something against you because perhaps you are a Christian and you are not liked for some reason; not because you are not altogether a likeable person, you

know that there is something extra in this, and you are being made to put up with things because you are a Christian, so you are suffering wrongfully, glory to God is in terms of grace if you take it patiently. Grace is a matter of divine nature.

The Demand for Self-subjugation

And what is the demand here? Well, it can be nothing else but the demand for self-subjugation. What is the opposite to taking it patiently? “When He was reviled, (He) reviled not again; when He suffered, (He) threatened not” (1 Pet. 2:23). It is your reaction to suffering, your reaction to what is hurled at you, what you are made to go through by other people, not because you have defaulted, but, so far as you know between yourself and the Lord, there is no reason for it at all. You have not been responsible for this. Is your reaction His? He reviled not again, He threatened not. He showed no resentment, no revenge, no spirit of getting even. “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34). “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). That is grace, but that is glorifying to God, that is the glory of God, that is the glory of Christ.

Ah yes, but this is something very hidden. No one knows the battle that is going on. Oh, how this cruelty, this unrighteousness, this evil, has stirred all that is in you that is bitter, and works upon that nature that makes you want to say some stinging thing, and you have had a real battle inside and you have got to prayer and conquered - and they see nothing of that. A quiet, meek spirit where the self-interest has been brought into subjection, all that self-life has been subjected in the battle, and you come out, and there is nothing like that discernible about you. This is grace, this is glory, glory in terms of grace. But it is in a hidden way, the secret battle, the history of which no one else knows at all; all that the Lord Jesus had between Himself and the Father behind all that was going on and all that was coming upon Him. Yes, the glory of the Lord Jesus is in the manifestation of divine grace under trial, under persecution. So with His saints and His servants and with His church; so with you, with me.

“Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God”, but that is the kind

of glorious thing that we do not altogether appreciate sometimes, yet it is the same glory. It is not a different glory of which the angels sang and spoke on the day of His birth from the glory that heaven was seeing in Gethsemane. No, it is the same glory, but God is working inwardly so that in the end that primal glory shall burst forth as something which has been inwrought by trial, by adversity, by affliction, by all these means, wrought in us so that we shall be partakers of His glory, sharers of His glory, and that now for us is grace. "The Lord will give grace and glory" (Ps. 84:11). They always go together just now in the in-between whiles, but presently it will be all glory.

Chapter 7 - Glory in Final Manifestation

"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah" (Ps. 87:3).

"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." (Heb. 12:22,23).

"Unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever." (Eph. 3:21)

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward. For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." (Rom. 8:18-22).

"There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body... Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death

is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15:40-44; 50-55).

"When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory." (Col. 3:4).

"That he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:27).

We have been engaged with glory in the church and in Christ Jesus. In chapter five it was God's initiations in glory. Chapter six was glory in hidden operation. Now it is glory in final manifestation. The passages which we have read all have to do with that. It is a little difficult to know what passages to use and what to leave out. There are many others that will have occurred to you in this connection.

The Creation Subjected to Vanity

Now we have first of all to get down to this statement of the apostle in Romans 8.

He makes this statement that God, in a sovereign act, at some point subjected the creation to vanity. "The creation was subjected to vanity, not of its own will" (v. 20). God was working contrary to and against what the creation wanted and desired, "not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope...". But the statement is that God sovereignly acted to subject the creation to vanity. The word 'vanity' as we in modern English usage employ it, hardly conveys the meaning of the original word, which would be more properly expressed in the word 'disappointment', and there is always an atmosphere around a word like that in the original - not just the disappointment, but it is the misery which accompanies the disappointment. So it is disappointing misery that is really the force of this word. God deliberately subjected the creation to disappointing misery. It had a purpose in its existence. It ceased to answer to that purpose, that appointment, which was to express God's nature, for it is in the expression of His nature that the glory of God, is found. When God has what is just according to the very essence of His being, what His very nature and being must have, when He has that fully satisfied,

that is glory. And the creation ceased to move in accordance with its appointment to express the nature of God for His satisfaction and thus exist for His glory. So God imposed this embargo upon it, and put disappointment in the place of appointment as an active operative force right into the very creation, a force of disappointment, appointment not only missed but impossible of realization in its existing state.

Little argument is needed to prove that disappointment rests upon this whole creation. The further the creation goes, the larger the disappointment, the more acute, the more terrible and the greater the misery. Is that true? I think we have enough evidence of that. But the first thing, then, is this sovereign act of God to bring the creation into that place of disappointment and consequent misery.

A Work Going On in the Groaning Creation

Then the second thing that the apostle says here is that there is a work going on even in the groaning creation. First of all, the creation itself “groans and travails”. Then there is something to be brought forth, there is something going on, something causing all the trouble, which is accountable for this state of things. I do not think that we have fastened sufficiently upon this, that the state of things in the creation, in the world, which is so full of anguish, disappointment and misery indicates that there is something coming. Those very groanings and travailings are prophecies that something is coming. “The whole creation groans and travails.”

“We Ourselves Groan”

And then the apostle says with that “ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves.” “The first-fruits of the Spirit”; this is another kind of groaning, this is the groaning inside the inside of creation. The creation is not groaning in the same sense as we are groaning. The creation is not groaning unto that for which we are groaning. It has not the first-fruits of the Spirit. We have. What are these first-fruits of the Spirit? Well, the very

chapter from which these words are taken indicates what the first-fruits of the Spirit are.

The First-fruits of the Spirit

“...The Spirit of God dwells in you. But if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (v. 9). Well, we have the first-fruits of the Spirit; firstly, the Spirit dwells with us. Then “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (v. 14). First-fruits of the Spirit - those in whom the Spirit dwells are being led by the Spirit. Then “the Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him” (vv. 16,17). The Spirit bears witness that we are children of God. First-fruits of the Spirit - indwelling, leading, bearing witness. We, who have those first-fruits find ourselves by those very things, by the very indwelling of the Spirit, the leading of the Spirit, the witness of the Spirit that we are children of God; by those very things we find ourselves groaning. What for? We have the first-fruits of the Spirit. They are not all the fruits of the Spirit. They are only a kind of indication of something more, something fuller, something larger, and, by the operation of the Spirit in us, a divine discontent with our spiritual state is produced; or, to put it the other way, a divine longing and craving for something more is created. First-fruits point to the full harvest and indicate that there is much more to be. What is it? Well, the first-fruits point to the end of the Spirit’s work - “that we may be... glorified with Him”.

Now the apostle turns over to the creation itself, and says that the whole creation is in a state of dependence on what is going on by the operation of the Spirit in us. “The creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (v.19). The creation groans and travails, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God, waiting until the Spirit has done His work and brought forth something glorious in terms of sonship to the satisfaction of God.

The Creation to be Delivered from Bondage

And when God has got that out of the creation, the apostle then follows on and says, “the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God”, the glory and the liberty, the release, of the sons of God. Bondage in the creation, bondage in us all, pointing towards a glorious manifestation, a manifestation in glory, and then, when the creation’s appointment shall be realized, the whole creation shall be delivered, God will have got His end. “The earnest expectation of the creation waits for the revealing of the sons of God.” A very strong word is used there: “Earnest expectation” - it is a picture of someone poised, outstretched, looking forward, looking on, scanning the horizon as though everything depended upon what will appear there. The eyes, attention, the whole being focused upon that horizon, looking for that appearing, that something that is coming, and the apostle uses that very word picture and says that the creation is like that - earnest expectation, poised, stretched out, focused, looking for the manifestation of the sons of God, because its very release and liberation depends upon that manifestation.

The Manifestation of Glory

Thus we are led to the manifestation itself, the manifestation of glory ultimately and finally. But pause a moment with the word ‘manifestation’. It is not the creation of the glory, it is the manifestation. That is, something is already going on, something exists already, something is already at work. That takes us back to the previous chapter - the mighty work of grace, glory in terms of grace. “Unto the glory of His grace”. A work is going on by the Spirit inside of us, changing us, transforming us, making us to partake of Christ’s likeness, His divine nature, and to express it under trial, affliction, adversity, suffering - yes, all that grace in terms of glory and glory in terms of grace, that is going on. The glory exists in a hidden way. Every victory of the grace of God in us is to His glory, His glory in essence going on in us. And then what is hidden, has been going on secretly, all

that formation of the Spirit, all that transformation of the Spirit, all that deep work of the Spirit, all that constituted after Christ by the Spirit comes to full manifestation, the manifestation in glory.

When the Manifestation will be

When will that be? Well, if it is glory in the church, if it is the elect, foreknown, chosen in Christ, foreordained, if it is those sons whom He chose in Christ before the world was, the manifestation of the glory must await and synchronize with the completing of the number of the elect, the bringing in of the last member of that church. It is in relation to that that the coming of Christ is said to stand. There is such a thing as cooperating with the manifestation. There is such a thing as hastening unto that day. While, of course, that is a matter of our own spiritual progress, it is also very definitely a matter of our cooperation with the Holy Spirit to get the number of the elect made up. God only knows who they are, we do not; hence the need for being led of the Spirit, as Philip was led to the desert to find one man, a very strategic man. You might decide to go somewhere and have a whole crowd, and because it is out of time or for some other reason, you might not get one of the elect in your efforts. If the Holy Spirit really leads you, you may always be sure that He is after the elect. He knows where the elect are.

But, details for the moment aside, the point is, herein lies the call and the urgency for being about this business of the Spirit, with Him finding the elect, and making up its number, for the glory waits for that, the manifestation of the sons.

I think there is very much more in that phrase, “the manifestation of the sons”, than I have indicated. I am trying to be very simple. The sons were all known and chosen before the world was, but He never told us who they are, He never told anybody who they are. He only knows. It is God’s secret, He knows who comprise His church. Those who comprise His church are not the only ones who are going to be saved eventually, but He alone knows who they are. But when the manifestation comes, it will be a disclosure of what He has known all along. From all eternity He has known His secret, His elect, His chosen,

and they will be manifested. Of course, that involves many difficult matters.

To keep to our simple point that, in the first place, the manifestation of the sons awaits the securing of the sons. There should be a sense of serious responsibility that, so far as we are concerned, we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in getting in the last member of the elect. We should be reaching out if perhaps one chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world might be within the compass of the Holy Spirit's operations through us. There should be laid upon our hearts a new impetus for reaching out to the unsaved, to those who are not yet gathered in, not just to have people saved from hell, but for the satisfaction of God and bringing about the release of the creation by the manifestation of those sons.

In the next place, the manifestation of the sons will be when the work of grace is completed in us. I like to think of the church as a whole in this connection. I do not know what you are going to say to my doctrine now. I am going to get myself into trouble, I think. However, I will risk it. I cannot take all the suffering that there is and all the adversity and all the trial, therefore I cannot swallow up all the grace of God. But you may suffer with me, we may share it, and you may add something to me by your suffering, and I may add something to you, and we may all be adding something to one another by our mutual sufferings. Oh brother, you are suffering, but you are not suffering alone. You are suffering for my good, I am suffering for your good, and you are going to share in my sufferings and I in yours to make up the sum of the perfecting, not only of individuals but of individuals as parts of a whole. It is the church that is going to be perfected. I need your sufferings to help mine. I need your grace in suffering to go with mine, and you need mine. It is the church that has to come to perfection, and no one member can have all the glory, therefore no one member can have all the suffering. It is a mutuality, a partnership in suffering, a togetherness, so that it shall be a togetherness in glory. We shall be together glorified. It is the perfecting of grace in the church. Oh, what a lot I would have to go through if all the grace of God was going to be perfect in me as an individual. I could not stand up to it. It is far too big a requirement to say that God's grace is going

to be exhausted in me. Oh, how great His grace is! It would cost too much for me to know it all. We are altogether in this, we are dividing this between us, the perfecting of grace in the Body, in a company that satisfies God.

May that not be the explanation of the intensifying tribulations at the end? Why should tribulations intensify and increase at the end? Why should those terrible things be found in the book of the Revelation about the enemy overcoming the saints for a time? But that is not the end. Yes, the end sees much tribulation, increasing tribulation, but increasing grace, increasing triumph, increasing glory. And so the glory will be manifested when there is a sufficient number of the elect, if I may put it that way, knowing the grace of God to the most perfect measure possible.

The Glory of His Appearing

Then, of course, the event. I do not believe that the Lord's coming is just some isolated and unrelated incident, something just as an event in a divine programme. It is bound up with the very things that we have been saying. The Lord's coming does depend upon the elect being completed. It does depend upon a work of grace having been done which makes it possible for glory to be manifested because it is a ground that can be glorified. Glory is not going to be willy-nilly. It makes its demands. But then the Lord's coming is a coming. It is the coming of the Lord, and we find so much about the glory connected with His appearing.

And you notice the coming of the Lord has two aspects. The first is His appearing. It is an appearing in glory. He Himself raised the question: What if ye shall see the Son of Man coming in the glory of His Father with His angels? Glory in His appearing.

Glory in Rapture

But the other side here is glory in rapture. His appearing is one side; our being raptured at His appearing is the other side. "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed" (1

Cor. 15:51), whether we are here or raised. That is rapture at His appearing, and then within the appearing are all those other blessed consummations. It is a consummation of the consummations. That wonderful passage we read from 1 Corinthians 15 - the glories in resurrection. "One glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars... so also is the resurrection of the dead." This resurrection is glory, and the apostle there focuses it, upon the body, of course, and I for one do not mind that. But "glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God", and one of the glories is a very welcome glory, this corruption putting on incorruption, this mortal putting on immortality; this natural body going, this soulical body going and that spiritual body coming. I like the apostle's phrase about that in another place: "We have a building from God, a house not made with hands" (2 Cor. 5:1). You cannot make a spiritual thing with hands, and you cannot therefore tear a spiritual thing to pieces with hands. It is "eternal, in the heavens", "not made with hands". It is one of the glories of His appearing and of our being changed, that all that we know now in the body of affliction and suffering and weakness and limitation, all that comes to us by way of this broken-down humanity, will pass out at His appearing, and that body of glory will come, which will have none of this. "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54). We have often quoted those words, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:57) as though that applies to our spiritual life here and now. Well, all right, use it as you like, but in the actual usage, it does not apply to our spiritual life. It applies to our bodies. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory" over death in our bodies at His appearing. Victory over death. Oh, death works in these mortal frames. What it brings upon us of suffering and limitation! How we groan to overcome all these workings of death. The apostle says, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" We are raised now incorruptible! Thanks be unto God Who gives us the victory! It is bodily victory that is referred to.

We could dwell upon these things much longer but we will not. We simply bring into view that "glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God", and these are some of the glories. The end is glory. God is

going to conform everything to His beginnings. He began in glory. The day we came to know the Lord, glory broke out within us. The glory has passed into secret, hidden working in terms of grace through the years of our Christian life. It is going to break out again, not as in its original limitation, but in its final fulness, all the work of grace completed and glory fully manifested at last.

Let us finish with one inclusive thought: we are called unto glory. What is your trouble just now? What is the matter with us? We think it is going to be anything but glory. What miserable things we are, how frequently we show weaknesses and failures and all that! We are called unto glory and we will never come unto glory because we have virtues and values of our own. It will be through His grace, and I believe that - if I may put it this way - the people who will have the greatest measure of glory in the end will be those who needed the greatest measure of grace, and knew it. There is hope for us then, if that is true. Let us hold on to that and believe it. The end is glory. God has fixed it to be so.