



We Have an Anchor

***A Timely Message for a
Church in Crisis***

Bhai Musafir

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Preface

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Hebrews 11:8-10

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. Hebrews 11:13-16

God had done something very deep in Abraham's heart. "*He looked for the city... whose builder and maker is God... They desire a better country, that is, a heavenly*", and then the writer of this letter to the Hebrews gathers it all up into this: "*He (God) hath prepared for them a city*".

The heavenly things had got such a hold on Abraham's heart that nothing else could satisfy that heart, and because heavenly things had got such a grip on him, earthly things lost their hold upon his life. This is a very real stage or phase in our spiritual pilgrimage. I reckon that God has done something in those who are 'born again from above' that links them to Abraham's heart. The heavenly things, in some measure, become more real and precious. It would not be wrong to say that as true Christians that is where most of us are now. We have come this far on a journey where there is nothing precious that can take the place outside of the things of Christ for us. Abraham never settled down to any thing of the natural world because God had done a deep work in his heart. He went onward to the end of his life... "*These all died in faith, not having received the promises*".

For many of us it may be all right to dwell in a tent for a little while, but the time comes when we say: 'Let us leave the tent of worldly conveniences and settled lives, and let us move on to all that the Lord has for us'. If we are moving with God we shall surely discover that He is never in favour of our settling down but always desires the spiritual man in us to reach forward to the things of God. This was also the perpetual cry of the apostle Paul who shows us that the horizon of the people of God is not the horizon of this earth. They "*greeted them from afar*" - there was always something more beyond, and this is a true mark of a spiritual progress toward the heart of God.

The fact is that the Lord must have us always going on. We are pilgrims and strangers, which means that we shall never come to finality here on this earth. If we are disappointed with what we thought would be the perfect thing, just remember that the Lord is calling us on to go on to something better. So what we have to learn is that we are called to be a heavenly people whose ways and methods are not the ways and methods of this world, but that of heaven. And in learning that lesson the Lord will take us on a journey which will end right in the heart of God. May the Lord help us to learn what is upon His heart.

Beloved Reader, the Lord has used the messages in this book to enlighten my eyes and set me on the right path. These messages not only touched my heart when I heard them, but they have been a repeated source of spiritual encouragement to move on in His purpose for my life.

Bhai Musafir

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Forward



We Have an Anchor

This hymn reminds us not to put our hope and trust in man, but rather on the Rock, our Lord Jesus Christ. It was written by Priscilla Jane Owens from Baltimore, Maryland. She was a schoolteacher for 49 years at Baltimore, and a member of the local Methodist Episcopal Church.

*Will your anchor hold in the storms of life,
When the clouds unfold their wings of strife?
When the strong tides lift and the cables strain,
Will your anchor drift, or firm remain?*

Refrain:

*We have an anchor that keeps the soul
Steadfast and sure while the billows roll,
Fastened to the Rock which cannot move,
Grounded firm and deep in the Savior's love.*

*It is safely moored, 'twill the storm withstand,
For 'tis well secured by the Savior's hand;
And the cables, passed from His heart to mine,
Can defy that blast, thro' strength divine.*

*It will surely hold in the Straits of Fear-
When the breakers have told that the reef is near;
Though the tempest rave and the wild winds blow,
Not an angry wave shall our bark o'erflow.*

*It will firmly hold in the Floods of Death-
When the waters cold chill our latest breath,
On the rising tide it can never fail,
While our hopes abide within the Veil.*

*When our eyes behold through the gath'ring night
The city of gold, our harbor bright,
We shall anchor fast by the heav'nly shore,
With the storms all past forevermore.*

Priscilla J. Owens (1824-1907)

A Hunger for the Bread of His Presence

The Scarcity of Bread

The emphasis of the Holy Spirit is to come into a place of hungering after Him. The Lord has been underlining the need to continually maintain a posture of hunger before Him. Let us not get familiar with the topic but let us be drawn to a place of actually *experiencing* Him. As the Spirit convicts us, let us maintain that posture of experiencing His Presence in these days. Let us not be found doing things outwardly for God. He is emphasizing an inward work in this time and hour. If we continue in a posture that only suggests an outward agreement, then we can be sure that it will not stand for long. God wants to bring about an inward change in our very being. In other words, these are days of repentance and change, not of reasoning intellectually. It is a tie for brokenness and humility. Let us not miss His workings in our lives. God will not force Himself on us, but He will give us opportunities. He will come into our lives with mercy and grace if we desire to move on with Him.

In the Book of Ruth, the Scriptures show that there were two women who left Bethlehem when there was a famine and went to Moab.

Ruth 1:1-6 Now it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehemjudah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Bethlehemjudah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there. And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons. And they took them wives of the women of Moab; the name of the one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten years. And Mahlon and Chilion died also both of them; and the woman was left of her two sons and her husband. Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

Ruth 1:6 (AMP) Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in Moab how the Lord had visited His people in giving them food.

Bethlehem means the *house of bread*. Two women left the house of bread and traveled to Moab. The reason they left the house of bread was that there was a famine—there was no bread in that house. The reality was that they went to Moab in search of bread.

In the Old Testament we find that bread was found in the Holy Place in the form of showbread. In the tabernacle there was a table of showbread. The bread in the temple was called the bread of His Presence. It signified the fruit of His Presence.

Exodus 25:30 (AMP) *And you shall set the showbread (the bread of the Presence) on the table before Me always. [John 6:58.]*

Leviticus 24:5 (AMP) *And you shall take fine flour and bake twelve cakes with it; two-tenths of an ephah shall be in each cake [of the showbread or bread of the Presence].*

Leviticus 24:6 *And you shall set them in two rows, six in a row, upon the table of pure gold before the Lord.*

Numbers 4:7 *And upon the table of showbread they shall spread a cloth of blue and put on it the plates, the dishes for incense, the bowls, the flagons for the drink offering, and also the continual showbread.*

The table of showbread was placed in the tabernacle. In the house of God the bread of His Presence was always available. Historically it was always an indicator of His Presence. In one translation of the Bible the showbread is called ‘show up bread’—the manifest Presence of the Lord. So it was a heavenly symbol of God in His house. This bread talks of His Presence.

The reason why Naomi and her family left Bethlehem was because there was no bread of His Presence. They left Bethlehem (the house of bread) and moved to Moab. They began to look for meaning in their life somewhere else. The house was devoid of bread. The spiritual cupboards were empty and bare. There was no presence of God in the pantry. There were only empty shelves. The offices in the house of God only had recipes for bread, but no bread. The ovens were cold and dusty not being in use for many years. The Scriptures say that this family moved out because of the lack of bread.

That is the condition of God’s house even today. We have neatly arranged shelves everywhere, but the spiritual cupboards are empty. The presence of God is missing; the pantry (or storeroom) lies empty. But there is no lack of recipes for making bread. The ovens are cold. God’s people make false claims that there is bread whereas there is nothing. There is a lot of knowledge of the bread but when the hungry come into the house, all that they get are crumbs that are gathered from the carpet floor. The bread of the Presence is missing and only crumbs are available. Lots of claims and advertisements are made, but in reality, there is nothing substantial to feed upon. Many words are spoken of His Presence and what He has done, but very little is said about what He is doing presently. His present workings are not visible and there is nothing to present to the people. That is what is happening in Christendom. Historical things from the past are being declared—where He had been and what He had done, but the majority of Christianity is ignorant today of where *He is* and what *He is doing today*. Oh, there is nothing as the bread of His Presence.

The Camouflage by Religious Spirits

Even in Jesus’ time, there was a temple that had a holy place. It had a veil but behind the veil the ark was missing. The veil was a curtain that made it seem that there was an ark. Everything appeared as if God was there within, but the Lord wasn’t there. The priesthood in Jesus’ time

camouflaged the emptiness by keeping the veil closed, though there was no ark of the covenant behind it. The religious people in Jesus' day did not want the people to realize that there was no glory behind their veil. Religious spirits always try to preserve something false; they try to show forth *what had been* rather than *what is now*.

God may have to really pierce the veil of the flesh to reveal the emptiness in our churches. In many lives there is a neatly laid veil and every expression implies that the Lord is there behind the veil, but He is not there. Like in Jesus' time, religious veils—thick and dense—are hanging outside, protecting the tradition, declaring very deceptively that He is there, but He is not there. The religious spirit would always like to hold on to history even in the days of the Lord Jesus. They wanted to preserve the knowledge of the place of the working of the Lord at the expense of what He was actually then working. So also it is today.

The Pharisees and the Jews had a religious spirit that appreciated the law and the prophets but neglected and rejected the One who was present, the One who had come to reveal the Father. They wanted to preserve the old things, the place where He had been before, all at the expense of denying His very presence with them. That was—and is—the tragedy. That is how the spirit of religion works. And today that is what is happening with the majority of God's people. They do not want to be in the place where the Lord is working and where He is present in the midst of His people. These religious spirits today strongly oppose the working of God in the midst of His people.

In John chapter 9, we see that the man of experience is never at the mercy of the man with an argument. This man said that once he was blind but now he was able to see.

John 9:25 Then he answered, I do not know whether He is a sinner and wicked or not. But one thing I do know, that whereas I was blind before, now I see.

The experience of a people who are living in His Presence in this hour will destroy every argument of man. People can bring many reasons and arguments, but these cannot stand against the experience of His Presence. People reasoned with the blind man, many arguments were brought before him, but he said, "*One thing I know, once I was blind but now I see.*" The man with an experience has the upper hand. If we can lead people to the manifest Presence of God, then every theological house of cards will tumble. If God in His mercy would have a people who would lead others to His Presence, then everything else will fall flat. Therefore we need to be a people of experience. We do not want to be a people that know all about the subject of the Presence of God. Let no one come to that conclusion. Beloved, the thrust of God's intention is that we may be a people of His Presence *through experience*. If we are being changed in His Presence, no argument can challenge that. Every argument born of human reason will fall flat. The need today is for us to be those who have experienced His Presence.

People go to the house of bread (the church) only to find there is too much of man there and very little of God. So much of man—and so little of God! God is longing to restore His manifest Presence in a people individually and collectively. That is His desire. Many times we talk of the

glory of God filling the whole earth even as waters cover the seas. How can that happen if it does not flow out of the threshold of His church? We hold on to the word of God, and surely He will fulfill it, but how will it come to pass if it does not come from His House? It must start from the church and even the local church at different places. Ezekiel wrote,

Ezekiel 47:1 Afterward he brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.

Here, and in subsequent verses in Ezekiel 47, we read of a going forth from the threshold of the house. The glory of the Lord must flow from you and me to have an effect on the whole world. We have to be a responsible people. People talk of the glory of God filling the earth and they sing the hymn declaring this truth so well, declaring it powerfully, but what is the use if we do not realize that it has to flow out of us and out of the threshold of the House of God. It has to begin with us.

When people do not get bread, they turn to many other things. Look at the so-called “Christian countries” where Christians predominate. They are supposed to have bread, but they do not have His Presence. People turn to drugs and many other things, the primary reason being that the church which is supposed to be the house of bread has no bread at all. In the West, many people are turning to ‘gurus’ and philosophies because the house of bread (the church) has no bread. When the bread of His Presence is missing people will turn away. We have witnessed that many have turned away from the church because the Presence of Christ was absent.

Not Satisfied with Crumbs

Naomi turned to Moab because there was no bread in Bethlehem, the house of God. It is terrible to turn to something else, for it will not bring us anything good. It will only result in loss. That is what we see—people turning from God’s house in search of something—but they only find things which can do them no good. Naomi and her family had lost many things. Their family had been robbed of the vitality of life, and they found themselves in a place of gloom and sorrow in Bethlehem. That is what we see all around. The house of bread does not have bread, and that is the condition of the mainline church today. The tragedy is that even those who call themselves believers have nothing but crumbs on the carpet. The cupboards of the churches are empty. The bread of His Presence is missing.

Ruth 1:6 Then she arose with her daughters in law, that she might return from the country of Moab: for she had heard in the country of Moab how that the LORD had visited his people in giving them bread.

Ruth 1:6 (AMP) Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in Moab how the Lord had visited His people in giving them food.

It is encouraging to see that Ruth and her family heard that they could get bread in Moab. A rumor of there being bread in Moab reached their ears. This shows that when the bread really arrives, it spreads to others. The news reaches others, and the hungry will come. When the real bread is available, the hungry will flock to it. We do not have to use promotional and marketing tricks. When the bread is really available in the House of Bread, the hungry will flock there without any kind of advertisement.

Today we find a Christianity that is given to advertisement. An enormous amount of money is spent so that people will attend the meetings and crusades. But when people come to the meetings, all that they get are crumbs. When the bread of His Presence is there in the House of His Presence—the church, then the hungry will come and there will be no need of any kind of marketing schemes. The hungry will be drawn to His Presence. Only people who are hungry for God will come, and those who have appetites for other things will not come. Let us have a deep hunger for His Presence and not for any other thing. When the bread is really present, God's people will know and they will flock to His Presence.

There is much more of God that is available than what we have known so far. Therefore let us be in a place of hunger and yearning for His Presence. The tragedy is that we get satisfied so quickly—and this is so dangerous. We lack a desire to press on further because we get satisfied easily. Let there be no complacency in our hearts. Let us not come into a place of contentment to any degree, or of the need for relaxation. But let us press on further, pressing on for the whole loaf of bread. God in His mercy is moving and working in our midst. Therefore, let us not be content, but go for the abundant loaves of nourishing bread from the oven of heaven that God is offering to us. Let us be open in our hearts. He has prepared a great table of His Presence and He is bidding His church to come and dine with Him. He is offering the whole loaf of bread to His people and He is inviting His church to come and dine with Him.

But where are they who would respond to Him in this hour? When we would seek Him and press on in the direction in which He is taking us, and when we would press on to take the bread of His Presence, the hungry will come.

When Naomi rose to return to the house of bread, someone else went along with her. Naomi is here as the picture of the prodigal—one who returned to the house having drifted away. But we see that when this prodigal returned, someone came along with her—namely Ruth. She never knew the living God and she was unsaved, having nothing to do with the house of bread. But when Naomi returned to the house of bread, Ruth went along with her back to the house of bread. That is thrilling! When the bread is available in the house, many will return as well as others who have never known Christ before. And this young woman Ruth, who came to the house of bread for the first time, never drifted away but made it to the end.

Ruth 1:16 And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.

Look at Ruth's determination! At the news of bread arriving at the house of God, there will be many Orphas who would never make it to the house of God. But on the other hand, when the bread of His Presence is available in the House of Bread, there will be a returning of those who had drifted away, and there will be new ones who will be brought in with them. This is happening in some measure. The Lord will integrate some into the fabric of the local church even here such as happened to Ruth. It will happen as soon as they taste the bread of His Presence. God is bringing some Ruths into the house of God, for they have heard that bread is coming to the house. As a result, they will be integrated directly into the house. This brought me to tears as I meditated on this. There are some who have been coming to this church for many years not recognizing the bread of His Presence. But there are those who have heard that the bread of His Presence is here, and the moment they came and tasted the bread of His Presence, they were integrated into the fabric of the Body and into God's eternal plan and purpose. This is the work of God undoubtedly, for He is no respecter of persons. Ruth had arisen from her sorrow and she came to the house of God. We see that she made it to the end in His purposes. That is very encouraging. The Lord is doing this work in some small measure in our midst, but I also see that a greater measure of His work will be done in the days ahead.

The Full Loaf of Hot Bread

Let us long for the full loaf of hot bread from heaven; the hot bread of the Presence of the living God. Our cry should be for the Lord to break forth in our life and in our midst. Let us say, "Lord we are tired of hearing of where you *had been* and what you *have done*; we want to see where you *are* and want to behold you in these days." Let this be our strong cry for God's Presence. We are tired of hearing about the Lord's historical presence. Do you know that God has no grandchildren? God only has children. As His children, we ought to experience His presence. It is not the former generation's experience that we need to hold on to. We must have a holy dissatisfaction with history and come into a strong cry for the present presence of the Lord. We are not called to recite what God did in the past, but God has called us to experience His visitation and His presence. Let nothing take the place of His visitation and habitation.

We know that Ruth was finally joined to the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ. This Moabite woman was brought into that by the Lord. In other words, we can say that future royalty depends on our hunger and our response to God's invitation to experience His presence. The future coming of the King is tied up with the hunger of His people. Today the majority are satisfied, content, and happy with their activities, their music, their worship, their new songs, their bible studies, fasting prayers, special meetings, discipleship training, conventions, outreaches and all the other activities that they take part in. This is what is seen today, almost everywhere.

In the midst of this, God has His true remnant who can never be satisfied. Deep within, they know that there is more of Him that they have ever seen, and they must lay hold of and come into the good of such reality. There is more of Him that they are hoping for. He will become their obsession. He will be their only obsession—and they will say, "I want God, and I want more and more of Him." That will be their cry before the Lord.

Though the majority will be happy with junk food given by Satan to keep them satisfied with earthly prosperity, there will be a few who will hunger for the real bread of His Presence. No doubt, people receive blessings from God, but we should know that the enemy often comes to deceive and to destroy and to kill. People say that God has blessed them mightily and they want nothing more; they are satisfied with whatever they have received. Others say, “God gave me everything and even a good church.” And there are yet others who are quick to acknowledge that God has met every need of theirs. Earthly prosperity seems to be the way that the enemy has pacified many people and kept them from the best. In the realm of the Spirit, they are paupers.

We hear a lot about something called a ‘prosperity gospel’. They say you can get whatever you want. Only name it, claim it and receive it. There are only three steps to prosperity, they say. But where is the bread of His Presence? A remnant is crying in the earth for more of the Lord and His life. They say that they only want God and that nothing else can take His place. They say, “Lord our eyes are upon that whole loaf of bread.”

Counterfeits in and of themselves can include the real thing, but also will include junk food which merely satisfies the flesh – but only temporarily. How hungry are you in reality? Let us remove the veil and check our lives. If we are desperately hungry for Him, we will forget all other things. A hungry man even forgets the need for good manners! If we are really hungry, we will forget all religious mannerisms. We will be liberated from those kinds of outward things. Do you know the difference between liturgical worship and charismatic or Pentecostal worship? In the former, worship is done according to a printed program—and in the latter, worship is often more or less memorized. But we need to be liberated from every kind of religiosity. May we come into a true hunger for His Presence! That is what happens when the Ruths are integrated into the House of Bread.

In the New Testament, we come across instances of people who forgot about religious mannerisms and discovered how their lives could be touched by His Presence.

Matthew 9:20-23 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise...

Other accounts of this incident (Mark 5:30 and Luke 8) tell us that Jesus was surrounded by a crowd and Jesus asked, “*Who touched my clothes?*” Here was a woman with no religious pretense who focused only on touching Him.

Matthew 15:22-28 And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and

said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Here we see another woman who came to the Lord having faced rejection from many others. The disciples wanted to send her away, but Jesus did not allow that. We see that she kept on begging, she persisted, she would not go—and in that way she may have appeared as quite rude and pushy. Though she could easily have been insulted by the Lord's statement in verse 26, she persisted and was not offended in her heart. She was desperately hungry for the bread. She refused to feel insult and forgot all religious mannerisms and customs. She had a focused cry before the Lord. She persisted and finally she received the bread for which she was desperately hungry.

Are you desperately hungry for the Lord? The question is, how much of Him have you received and possessed. Are you after something counterfeit or are you after something genuine and original in Him? Are you caught up with a mental gain – a desire for information, knowledge and facts? If you turn from a religious pursuit, but instead allow your inner man to hunger for the living God, then you will never be tired or worn out – nor will you be disappointed. The more of Him you receive, the more you will hunger for Him. This may seem like a paradox, but this bread of heaven is different from the bread available in the earth. This bread causes you to be hungrier after you have eaten it. It causes a greater appetite. This is the quality of the bread of His Presence. This was true of the apostle Paul, for the more he experienced His Presence, the more he hungered and cried out for Him. He cried, *“That I may know Him.”* This is not something that will bring mental gain; it is not a religious pursuit. This needs to be the cry of our heart in these days.

Let us pray that a greater desire for the reality and presence of God will grip us in these days, that we will all cry out for a greater measure of His Presence, that the bread of His Presence will become a reality, that we shall become obsessed with the bread of His Presence, no matter what it will cost, however inconvenient or costly it may be. Let us not be troubled by the opinions of men. Let the desire of the Lord to reveal Himself to, in and through us to a greater and greater degree be the only governing factor in our lives.

One thing is sure, that such a people as the remnant will have no place in the Christianity of today. They will be apprehended of God and deeply yearn for His Presence in this hour. How hungry are you for the Presence of the Lord? If you are truly hungry for the Lord, you will elbow your way into His Presence. You will be like the woman who cried and yelled until she received the bread. That is the only way that the bread can return to the house of God. If we want this house to be the bread of His Presence then we must cry out and seek His face, despite every insult. She was determined because she was desperately hungry. God will not deny such a

people. When the bread of His Presence returns to the House, the Lord will bring the Naomis and the Ruths to the house of God.

God's Call for Intimacy

A Mountain of Decision

We need to be a people who really seek after the Lord in these days. Let His people not miss whatever He has for His people. He is favoring those who would seek after Him. Let us seek His presence more than any other thing.

The church today can be likened to the children of Israel in the wilderness. The church has made it to some distance in God's purpose across the wilderness but she does not seem to be moving ahead. We could say she has come half-way in the journey across the wilderness and now has come to a halt. The church is camped at the foot of Mount Sinai much like the children of Israel in the Book of Exodus.

When the children of Israel came to Mt Sinai, they were called to make a very important decision. In our walk with the Lord, we have also reached a point where we have to make a decision. It is a matter of whether we will go in with God or whether we will move away and run from the presence of God.

Exodus 19:4-6 Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel.

The Lord said to His people that they would be unto Him a peculiar people – literally *a special treasure* – and a kingdom of priests. This is New Testament language on the pages of the Old Testament. In the New Testament we read of similar words in 1 Peter 2:9 “*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*”

The children of Israel were given an obvious opportunity of coming to a new level of intimacy with God. They were saved from sin, they were under the atoning blood of Christ when they came out of Egypt, and they were baptized in the Red Sea. They had experienced the delivering hand of God, but here God conveys His deep desire to bring them into a place of intimacy in Himself which they had never known before.

We also have come to a mount of decision in our lives. We can be content with burning bushes and rejoice over past encounters with God when we were born again. We can be satisfied with God-carved tablets of commandments that speak of fresh revelation, wisdom or understanding that the Lord may have given to us in His word. We can be satisfied with many miracles that we have experienced in the past. But as in the case of Israel, these are the days we need to come to the mount of decision in our lives. God in His mercy has pulled us out of sin and out of the world and He has begun to make a people out of us. That is what the journey in the wilderness was

about. God was making a people out of ‘no people’. In times past, we were not a people, but God is making us a people of God. *“Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy”* (1 Peter 2:10).

What kind of people were the children of Israel? God took slaves and menial servants who had no self-esteem and He placed His own character in them. He placed His own name on them and called them to be His people. What a tremendous work of God. He pulled them out of Egypt so that He could make a people out of them.

The Lord brought the descendants of Abraham to the foot of Mt Sinai and that was no easy job even for the Lord. A great number of people with differing thoughts and ideas had to be molded to His ways. Even when they came out and felt hungry, God’s desire was that they should seek Him for their needs. Instead of that they murmured and complained to Moses. That was their attitude. God did not desire them to die of hunger, but He wanted them to seek Him for their bread—that they may come to God for all their needs. God caused them to hunger that they might come to know that man does not live by bread alone. He wanted them to know Him as their sustainer, provider and keeper. God had something better for the children of Israel. But they berated Moses and told him how good they had it in in Egypt, in spite of it being the place of their bondage. The tragedy was that they did not pray to God, but instead asked Moses to pray to God on their behalf. They had a privilege to go to God and ask of Him, but they did not use that privilege.

Again when there was a water shortage, they entreated Moses but did not seek the Lord. They blamed Moses for the impossible situations they faced and called him an unspiritual man. They blamed him for not being concerned for their welfare. They cornered Moses to complain to him instead of seeking God. It is so true that many believers today do not seek God for themselves. They won’t go to God for their needs, but instead bring their complaints to their leaders. None of us should be like that, for we have a great privilege and opportunity of a direct approach to God; a privilege that should never be forfeited. Each one of us has the privilege of knowing God as our very own sustainer and provider. Let us not be those who go and ask their leaders to pray for them so God will satisfy their needs.

Israel always shied away from their responsibilities. They were called to seek God and know Him, but they were unwilling. God had such better things for them—more than eating and drinking. And as we see Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, we might imagine God saying to Himself, “If I can take them past this mountain, then I will be able to take them all the way in my purposes for them.” They were unwilling to move on in the purposes of God. Surely it was a place of decision for them.

Called to a Place in Him

The saddest thing in the Book of Exodus is that the group of people whom God had brought out of Israel was not the same group that God took into the land of promise (except for only two – Joshua and Caleb). Something happened at the foot of Mt Sinai. God had called them and made

them a nation for the first time in their history. He called them to a place of blessing, and to a place of change, but they never wanted to go in the first place. The blessing that God had for them was not just a piece of real estate in the promised land, but they were called to a place in Him. God called them to a promised place in Him—a promised place of intimacy with Him. He called them to the place of a covenant with the Creator. This was never offered to any other people on the earth. They were called to come into a place of intimacy with their God—it was something unique and special, for God had not extended this call to any other people. That is the secret of the secret place. The Lord calls His people to Himself—to be a peculiar treasure and a kingdom of priests unto Himself. This was God’s original plan for Israel.

Exodus 19:10-13 And the LORD said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to day and to morrow, and let them wash their clothes, And be ready against the third day: for the third day the LORD will come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai. And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, Take heed to yourselves, that ye go not up into the mount, or touch the border of it: whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: There shall not an hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man, it shall not live: when the trumpet soundeth long, they shall come up to the mount.

It is of significance that no one was to touch the mount until the trumpet sounded. The people were to prepare themselves (by sanctifying themselves) for the Lord to come to the Mount. And when the trumpet sounded a long note, the people were to rise and assemble at the mount. This was the Lord’s desire.

The first generation of God’s people believed the ten spies who brought back daunting and worrisome report (rather than obey the Lord) and shrank away from the promised land in fear. But the real reason for their fear is found right here at the foot of the mountain. The Lord wanted them to come up to the mount, but they were not willing to go. He wanted fellowship and intimacy with all Israel, but the people were uncomfortable with nearness to God. That was the tragedy.

Intimacy is Better than Distant Respect

Exodus 20:18 And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off.

They saw the lightning and heard the thunder, and they shrank back in fear. They ran from His presence instead of pursuing Him as Moses did. Why did they fear Him? When the lightning and thunder came these people ran but Moses pursued Him. Why? Beloved, they were all called to the Mount and to intimacy with God. But they did not pursue the Lord. This was the cause of their death in the wilderness later on. They preferred distant respect over intimate relationship.

What a terrible decision they made! The children of Israel preferred fear to intimacy. Is this not the philosophy of the world? People say that it is better to be far away from God than to be near

Him for fear that they would be called to act against their will. People prefer to maintain their respect of God from a distance rather than to seek to have an intimate relationship with Him. Many say that it is good for others to pursue God, but they would rather stay far away. This also seems to be the choice of many believers. They choose to honor the Lord from a distance, but refuse to come any closer for fear that they would have to pay a greater cost. Though many think this way, the reality is that it will lead to spiritual poverty, limitation and loss!

We are all called to fellowship with the Lord. There are no front ranks and rear ranks, no first lines and second lines in the church. We are all called into an intimate relationship with the Lord. Every moment is important. Let us be careful to see what reasons are keeping us away. Some of us feel that a certain gathering of saints is not for them. Their heart does not go in the direction of the move of the Spirit. But they will miss the will of the Lord and the visit and the voice of the Lord. God is no respecter of persons. God said unto Cain, *“If you do good, will not God honour you? If you offer will not I accept your sacrifice? I will.”*

Let us have another look at what keeps us away from the gathering of God’s people. What reasons do we have? God gives us every opportunity to gather and seek His face and so let us not be like the children of Israel. A time was given to them for intimacy with the Lord, but they said they would rather stay away and honor Him from a distance. Beloved, God did not plan death for their generation. They were called to a place in Him, but they refused to come to Him on that day at the foot of Mt Sinai. And for many years their decision limited them. The consequences of that one decision followed them all the days of their lives. Whatever happened in the succeeding years was a consequence of that decision taken by them at Mt Sinai—and they reaped the consequences of their decision in the following years. What a tragedy! Beloved, do not forfeit the privilege you have. Make sure of your priorities!

When they kept away from the invitation to come up to the Lord, they missed His will in their lives. They lost their opportunity and fear overtook them. They looked across the Jordon at the promised land and shrank back, but it really began when they shrank back from the Lord at Mount Sinai. They ran away from God and only wanted Moses to stand between them and the Lord.

The Roots of Fear

Exodus 20:19-21 And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not. And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.

Beloved, the church has been suffering because we want someone to stand between us and God. Somehow we don’t want the responsibility to stand before God. We would rather some pastor or some ministry takes this responsibility. The church has been eaten away by such an attitude. Even when the Lord invites us to come near Him, fear seizes some of us. The roots of fear go back to the Garden of Eden when Adam wanted to hide from God. Adam and Eve hid in

shameful fear when God wanted to have fellowship with them. That is where we find the roots of our fear. Sin had come between them and the Lord.

God told the children of Israel to sanctify themselves and to come up unto Him when the long trumpet blast was blown. That was the desire of God, but they shied from that awesome responsibility. What would you do today? Would you shy away or would you respond to His call upon your life?

We were not a people, but God in His mercy has brought all of us to this mount. We have been made a people. God has taken us out of the terribleness of sins in our past lives. We were not a people; but God in His abundant mercy has showered His mercy upon us to be a people. The call today is to come closer to Him, to come near Him, to come to a place of intimacy, to come into His presence. What should we do? It is not a matter of how long we have been saved. There is only one call upon all the redeemed ones. It is a call to come closer, nearer into His very presence. Will we act like Moses or like the rest of Israel? Moses moved on with God when others came to halt.

On the mount of Sinai, the fear of the children of Israel sowed more seeds of fearing the enemy within them. And so it is in the church. In a very real sense we stand at a critical crossroad today. We need to respond to God and His call in this hour. Let there be no fear to come closer to God, for He is calling us to come. He is not holding a stick behind His back. He is calling us and His intentions are good for us. The Israelites thought they would die if they came closer to Him. Where did this fear come from? When we tell people that God has called us to go on to perfection, they invariably say it is not possible. Fear overwhelms them. But God is calling us to intimacy. We need to cast out this misplaced fear of the Lord when He is calling us to a place of His presence. We must respond to God's call whatever it may cost.

We often hear people talk of great days and times they had with God in the past. But, to look back at the blessings we received in the past will not help us. To be occupied with the times of His presence in the past, in some camp-meeting or in some special place, will not benefit us. With God we can live in the present, and not settle merely for some past event. We can walk in the freshness of what He has for us every day. That is the privilege that God is offering to us. Our future depends on our decision in this hour. What is our heart and attitude to these things? The Lord will not force us into anything.

God's Call to Come Closer

Exodus 33:13-18 Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this

thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory.

The Lord promised to give Moses rest. Moses did not ask for rest. He asked to see God's glory. He was not weary of the journey; he did not pray for some heavenly benefit that would ease the way. He realized that he had to receive much more from God. He longed for more of Him. He said, "*Show me thy glory.*" This talks of pursuing God rather than of retreating from His presence. We need to have a heart that longs for intimacy with the Lord in these days.

There is a great contrast between the attitude of Moses and the children of Israel. Moses longed for a deeper intimacy with the Lord. On the other hand the people were willing to forfeit the call for intimacy.

Many things happened at Mt. Sinai. The commandments were given to them, the tabernacle was revealed to them, and the tabernacle was built according to the instructions God gave Moses. It was also there that the golden calf came forth and idolatry was found right there at Sinai; idolatry followed close at the heels of Sinai. Though God had so many precious things for His people, He made it clear that He wanted to deal with His people directly and personally. God wanted a personal intimacy. Till that time, Moses had been relaying God's words to the people for they were in a period of transition and change. In Exodus chapters 19 and 20 we see the Lord bringing in a change. He wanted His people who had come out of Egypt to grow up. He wanted to deal with them personally and directly—this was the new step He wanted to take.

God is calling us to a place and a realm of intimacy which we have not entered into before; to a place where we would know the heart of God; to a place where we would hear His voice in a personal way. This is a call into His presence. This is a time of transition for us as it was for the Israelites, when God wanted to talk to them directly as a nation of holy priests without any intermediaries. God wanted to deal with them directly as His nation and as His people.

This is the purpose of our deliverance—intimacy with the Lord. He wants to be in the midst of His people. God does not want a long-distance relationship. He wants a close encounter with us. He wants to invade our lives, our homes, our gatherings, and our church with His abiding presence. This is the longing of His heart. We have to decide what we ought to do. Will we go in or will we run away?

God Called Them to Intimacy but They Ran Away

"And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off."
(Exodus 20:19)

What a divine dichotomy! One ran away but the other ran in. God was calling a people to intimacy but they ran away from Him. They told Moses, ". . . *let not God speak with us, lest we die*" (Exodus 20:19).

They understood that only things that match the character of God can stand in His presence, and other things will perish or die. By running away they were saying, “We won’t be able to live up to that (the character of God as revealed in the Ten Commandments). We don’t want to live up to that. Don’t let God talk to us now.” They realized that the things of the flesh cannot measure up to His character and therefore they could not stand before Him. That is why they were so afraid. Do we find something deep within us that chooses not to go closer to the Lord? Why is there a fear within us to come closer to the Lord? It shows that we do not want to go all the way.

God gave the Israelites ten commandments to clean up their lives, to be cleansed and sanctified and come closer to His presence. The natural man will be afraid to approach God and that is the reason God wanted them to sanctify their lives. They could come closer to Him after they had sanctified their lives. But man saw it differently. God gave the Ten Commandments so that man may no longer live at a distance from Him but come closer and be intimate with Him. Surely God’s thoughts are much higher. He was not satisfied seeing His people from afar but wanted to come closer, as He did with Adam and Eve in the cool of the desert day. God wanted His heart’s desires to be open before man. Our God has not changed. He is looking for a people who will come into intimacy with Him so that He may reveal His heart to them. He longs for this even today. Nothing has changed as far as God is concerned.

How many are willing and prepared to enter into His presence? How many will decide to go on with the desires of the Lord? Many believers do not have a real sense of the abiding presence of the Lord because they refuse to clean up the clutter in their lives.

Israel said ‘if the Lord would speak to us we will die’; but we should say ‘Lord speak to us even if we happen to die!’ That is how Esther came before the king. She gave herself to preparations and finally she appeared before the king and said, “*I go to meet the king and if I perish I perish.*” What is the use of our lives if God’s needs are not met? God created us that He may have an intimacy with us. If we don’t come to that place, how futile will our lives turn out to be? So, let our prayer be, “Lord speak to me even if I were to die.” We were created to this end. It is better to die hearing His precious voice. This is the cry of the remnant. This is the end to which we were born again in Christ Jesus. Let us not be like Israel who did not want His presence. Many do not want His presence because it calls for a sanctifying and a cleansing and a purifying. Let us be prepared to change.

It blesses us to hear what Moses said, “*Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces, that ye sin not*” (Exodus 20:20). Was he a special creation that he did not fear?

The NIV Bible says, “*Fear not, God has come to test you to keep you from sinning.*” The Lord is only testing us to keep us from sin. Do not be fearful of the thundering and lightening that speak of His awesome power and presence. He just wants us to come to Him cleansed and holy. This is what Moses told the Israelites, “The Lord only wants you to come closer to Him with a clean

heart.” That is all He wants even today. Is there anything in us that should hinder our coming closer to fellowship with Him?

Moses Drew Near

In our younger, naughtier days, we would be quick to hear our father’s footsteps especially when we had done something wrong. His footsteps used to warn us and put fear within us. Lightning and thunder were God’s footsteps to the Israelites. Some of us fear to come closer to God in case He would become unreasonable with us. It is not so. He is not an unreasonable God. He longs for intimacy. His word is coming to us so that He may come closer to us. Let us not withdraw. If we can hear His footsteps it is because He wants us to come closer to Him.

Moses said to his brethren, “Come in brethren, though it is a cloud of darkness; it is God. He has never done this before, but He is calling you in. He has come close to us in the Mount. He has come down in the mount because he wants all of us to draw near to Him together.”

God always starts with the leadership. Moses had already stepped into the thick darkness as he had done once before. God not only wanted Moses, but all of His people to come closer and step in. But they ran away instead.

God’s desire for all of us is to come closer to Him. That is the desire of God for all of us and not only for the leadership. Let us expect great changes in us. God is going to do a work of cleansing in our lives that we have never experienced before. God is coming closer to us. Let us be prepared. Let us not be overtaken by fear like the Israelites who preferred to stay at a distance when they were called to be intimate with God. Let us make a fresh decision today. Would you choose to press on in—or would you rather stay away at a distance? That one decision will make all the difference to your life. It will have deep consequences in your life. They perished in the wilderness because they did not choose to come near Him but chose to remain at a distance.

How many of us are prepared to enter into the unknown where God is?

“To Whom is the Arm of the Lord Revealed?”

Isaiah 53:1-12 Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

There is so much that is precious here! The word ‘*arm*’ is used symbolically many times in the Scriptures to signify that upon which man relies for strength and support. The arm represents the person: sometimes the person is in weakness, and his arm is described as being weak; sometimes it is in strength. The arm is the symbol of the person, or sometimes used of the people or the nation, but always indicating the state of strength or weakness. This phrase, therefore, “*the arm of the Lord*”, when used in relation to men or nations, implies the giving of His strength and support to that which is according to His mind, the showing of Himself in power on behalf of it.

To whom, then, will the Lord show Himself in power? To whom will the Lord ‘*make bare*’ His arm (Isaiah 52:10)? “*To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?*”

Isaiah 52:10 says, “*The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.*”

The History of the Revealing of the Arm of the Lord

In the Bible there are very many incidents and particular occasions characterized by this phrase, “*the arm of the Lord*”. For instance, in the bringing of Israel out of Egypt, we find repeated reference to the baring of His arm, and the stretching forth of His arm. That incident is so often referred to as being an outstanding occasion of the Lord’s showing of His arm, the ‘*lighting down of His arm*’ (Is. 30:30) to His people—the baring of His arm for His people. To bring them out, the arm of the Lord was revealed.

Isaiah 30:30 And the LORD shall cause his glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of his arm, with the indignation of his anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones.

If you read and consider that whole story of God’s dealings with Pharaoh and Egypt on behalf of His people, we find that it is all gathered up in this: it was the revealing of the arm of the Lord. We see the arm of the Lord revealed for His people. Of course, it is but an illustration—an anthropomorphism, attributing finite human characteristics to an infinite God—the arm of the Lord, the power and strength of the Lord being revealed for the emancipation of an elect people from the kingdom of this world and of darkness. The arm of the Lord is revealed for what is His own will and desire. The Lord gives His own power and strength for what is after His own heart.

Again, take the case of Israel’s deliverance from Babylon. The children of Israel were in bondage in Babylon—that was another occasion when the arm of the Lord was revealed. How often the arm of the Lord was outstretched towards Israel while they were in captivity or in bondage!

Isaiah 43:14 Thus saith the LORD, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; For your sake I have sent to Babylon, and have brought down all their nobles, and the Chaldeans, whose cry is in the ships.

The arm of the Lord stretched out over Babylon, brought down her rulers, and overthrew her forces in order to bring the people back from captivity. And again, that was symbolic of the recovery of a pure testimony amongst the Lord’s people; a testimony that had been lost was recovered. At such a time as that the arm of the Lord was revealed to His people. The question we need to ask is: “*To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?*” or in another verb tense: ‘*To whom **will** the arm of the Lord be revealed in these days?*’ The answer is that the arm of the Lord will be revealed for that purpose which is after the mind of the Lord and the heart of the Lord—it is for that purpose, and in relation to that which is purposed in the heart of God. It is very clear that the arm of the Lord will only be revealed in relation to God’s eternal purpose, to support that which is according to His mind, to recover and restore a testimony that has been lost.

But it is in the raising of the Son from the grave, and in His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty in the Heavens that we surely see the supreme example of the revealing of the arm of the Lord. We thank God for revealing His arm in the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, His Son.

And in those succeeding early days of the Church, how wonderful was this revealing of the arm of the Lord! In the events narrated in those first chapters of the Book of the Acts, we see His arm stretched out again and again.

Acts 4:29-30 And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus.

In spite of the fact they were suffering persecution, a few met together for prayer, and they prayed: *“Grant unto Thy servants... boldness while Thou stretchest forth Thy hand... and that signs and wonders may be done...”*

Later, Herod came under the impact of that arm of the Lord; Saul of Tarsus came under its same impact, this man who was spitting fire against the church and doing so much damage to her. This happened because of the hand of the Lord which was outstretched towards the church. In many such places and circumstances the arm of the Lord was revealed.

And before we are at the end of the New Testament, the whole of the nation of Israel has met the arm of the Lord. It was revealed in the complete overthrow and scattering of Israel as a nation, and so thorough was the overthrow that her original integration has never yet been recovered. More still—the great Roman Empire unleashed her forces against the Lord and against His anointed, but the empire met the arm of the Lord and was completely destroyed, ceasing to be either an empire or a nation.

This is the history of the revealing of the arm of the Lord. These are just a few examples in history of the revealing of the arm of the Lord, *“To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”*

Now you will notice that many of these instances have certain features in common.

Firstly, there was revealing of His hand against world powers that came against God, the lifting up of the head on the part of the powers of this world against the Lord and against His anointed.

Secondly, His arm was revealed where there was the involvement of the Lord’s glory and the Lord’s purpose, during conditions of weakness or apostasy amongst His own people. For example, the bondage of God’s people in Egypt was not for His glory. After the covenant that the Lord had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, it was altogether contrary to the revealed purpose of His heart that the sons of Israel be in bondage to Egypt, giving their strength to the powers of evil. God never intended for His sons to be slaves in Egypt. It was entirely contrary to the glory of God to have Israel in Babylon; it was dishonoring to Him and contrary to His revealed intention and original thought and plan. But it happened because of the condition of God’s people. How often it was like that—that the Lord revealed His arm because of a condition amongst His own people. The people of the Lord had lost His testimony in Egypt and Babylon, but yet the arm of the Lord was revealed to restore and bring back His people to His plan and purpose.

And then, **thirdly**, there was a cry from within an instrument of God in intercession. There was Moses in touch with God right from the inside in relation to that situation in Egypt; there was Daniel, and a few others with him, right on the inside of the situation in Babylon, crying out to God. We see an instrument of God crying to God from within. There were those prayer meetings recorded in the Book of the Acts—the cry of the elect to be avenged. This was a feature common to the intervention of God again and again—a cry from the inside. We see the arm of the Lord revealed when we cry from within in relation to the situation we face.

We have seen things in history, but is there a situation in our time which corresponds to these in that threefold connection? Is there a condition like that today? I think the answer is obvious. We are living in similar conditions and situations. Are world powers lifting up their heads against the Lord? It is seen everywhere that they are lifting up a hand against the Lord. Was there ever a time when the throne of God was more challenged by world powers than today? Look at the moral decay all around that challenges the living God, as well as the very throne of God.

Is there not a condition in Christianity which brings much dishonor to the name of the Lord? Is the Lord's true testimony today not involved in a spiritual state which is contrary to His revealed mind? The answer again is self-evident. The name of the Lord is dishonored again and again. It is impossible in these days to move about this world without meeting these two things and being almost overwhelmed by them. The tremendous force of evil, the rulers, and the people themselves that are set against the very throne of God! People who love the Lord and are aligned with His word feel it, meet it, and face it everywhere. That is distressing, but it is reality.

And if that is distressing, without exaggeration, even more distressing is the state of God's own people. We meet with that condition every day and everywhere. The condition of God's people is such a contradiction to what God has revealed as to His purpose. Sometimes we are almost compelled to say that the greatest enemy of Christianity is—*Christianity*. I am speaking, of course, very generally. The honor and glory of God challenged today because the condition amongst His people is terrible and most dishonoring to the Lord. We see these two conditions today; people outside challenging the throne of God, and a people within with their division, apostasy, weakness and iniquity.

What about the third feature? There were men like Moses who had a cry from within, that brought forth the arm of the Lord. Is there a cry from the inside? In the days of Israel there was a cry from within for deliverance from Pharaoh; in the days of the captivity, there was a cry inside Babylon in relation to their captivity, and we see the arm of the Lord being revealed in relation to His purpose and plan for deliverance from Babylon. Is there a cry from inside and within today? It is difficult to say much about this—perhaps Yes and No.

There is a growing sense within the heart of many children of God that things are not right with God's people, but they do not position themselves to seek God. They are aware in a real sense that this is not what the Lord had intended for His church and the life of His people to be. There is, I believe, a cry deep down in many hearts for a deep change in the spiritual condition among His people.

Many are given to generalities. They say that God's people have become spiritually cold. They say that we need a revival. These are the general things we hear. That kind of cry will not help. There needs to be a discerning and understanding cry, a cry born of deep conviction that the Lord meant something other for His Church than this, that what the Lord has for His people is something different to what we have. What we see around us could never answer to God's need and standard; it can never satisfy Him! That is the kind of cry that needs to come from His church. It is only to such ones that the arm of the Lord will be revealed. Our eyes must behold the king and His glory. That alone will bring us into the place of a deep cry within. This is what is missing today. The Lord wants to avenge His enemies. Why do the heathen rage? Why do they speak against God's anointed? The Lord mighty is able to perform and is ever willing to reveal His arm to His people. *But where is the cry? Where is the Moses and the Daniel? He is ever willing to support His people in the earth, but where is the cry that is able to discern and correspond to the heart of God. The Lord must have it if He is to be able to do anything; but even if it is only a Daniel and three or four others in Babylon, that is enough for Him. I would lay great emphasis upon this last point: the urgent need for a deepened, strengthened cry to God.*

Our eyes need to see what is upon the heart of God. If the Spirit opens our eyes and ears, there will be a deeper consciousness that the Lord is not getting what He ought to get from us, that our lives do not really answer to God's need and satisfaction at this time. Our expressions in this regard will be deeper in our beings in the days to come if our eyes are truly opened. The Lord must have such people, even if it be a Daniel and a few others. Let us not just go with the crowd. *Is there a seeing eye? Is there a cry in secret places?*

This is what we have been called to. Some cannot discern our calling in Christ nor can they see what is happening all around. We find no fault with the things around us, and that shows that our spiritual eyes are not open. Our decisions show that our eyes are not open. There needs to be a specific cry. A discerning cry is the greatest need. An understanding cry, a cry born of deep convictions is what we need because of what we see all around that does not answer to God's standards. It would never satisfy Him and meet His need. There must be a cry within for something else to come forth in our midst. This need for a deeper and stronger cry unto the Lord is the emphasis of this hour.

Let us not be complacent. Today many things are happening in the Christian world around us. People come with novel ideas. Some make a lot of noise and advertise that this or that is the need of the time. They call for organization, demanding revival publicly, and it becomes a public concern. And they get together and organize, but that is not God's way. It is but man's way. What a tragedy! God's way is to cry from within in relation to that situation, because a people are not able to see God's purpose, His plan and His need for His church. But that is not happening. Instead what is happening is that there is a lot of organizing today, coming together to take up this or that cause and to get man's name exalted rather than God's name. Where are the Moses' and the Daniels and the Ezra's? There needs to be discerning cry in our midst. We can never have a discerning cry if we do not see rightly. If we see the right thing in the right

measure it will bring a proper discernment and response. Our discernment will come from our beholding. When we see what is upon the heart of God we will come to the place of brokenness; we will come to the place of seeking His face; we will be baptized into His travail and anguish. When a people come into that place, the arm of the Lord will be revealed. *But first God must have a people who will be in travail.*

The arm of the Lord was revealed to the Lord Jesus because He was a man of sorrows (Isaiah 53). He saw what was upon the heart of the Father and that He did not receive what He should receive. It is one thing to understand things by the natural mind, and quite another thing to see spiritually by the Spirit of God, for the Spirit to reveal it in your heart in secret deep within. In is unbearable and intolerable and it will bring us to a place of travail and weeping. This is what God is looking for—a people who would relate themselves to God and His need wherever they may be—a people who will really cry out to God because God is not getting what He ought to get.

Surely the arm of the Lord will be revealed and God's people will come into the fullness of all that He has for them. God must have His instruments of intercession with an understanding and discerning cry of conviction. Can God find those instruments in our midst?

Let us sense and know what is upon the heart of God. Let us not be caught up with our needs in this hour. He is looking for vessels of intercession—for Daniels and Moses's who will be people of tears right there in the midst of their situations and circumstances. May God help us and may we hear His voice.

Christ, the Tabernacle of God

GOD wants to place before us some thoughts that have an eternal meaning and purpose. Let none miss the present emphasis of the Spirit in our lives. We need to guard our mentalities and never allow human thoughts to hinder whatever God wants to do. The Lord is speaking a serious counsel to us. May we remain focused and give ourselves to the Spirit. The measure of our obedience to this word will show us the measure of our growth in spiritual matters. How much are you giving in to what the Lord is speaking to you?

We have the eternal thought of God in two important passages:

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. (Exodus 25:8 KJV)

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 KJV)

In these verses we are able to see the eternal thought of God set forth in time and reality. The former verse gives us God's thought in terms of time and the latter shows us His thought in terms of the reality. The thought of God is that He may dwell in the midst of man.

Today we see that Christendom is governed by many other things, and this eternal thought is neglected though the Bible begins and ends with it. We see the reflections of this throughout the Bible and yet we see a blind Christianity that has set this thought of God aside.

In the example of Adam, we see God coming down to man to have fellowship with him. He found His pleasure in dwelling with man. That kind of union and fellowship was broken when man chose to go his way. Man made his own way to go to God. We see that God had to withdraw Himself and the desire of God for that time was suspended.

In Exodus, the Lord takes up His eternal thought once again in Chapter 19 of Exodus where He calls Moses to the mount and expresses His desire for His people to be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, and a peculiar people. This shows His desire to be with man. God commands Moses to build a sanctuary for Him to dwell in their midst. That was only a type and figure of the reality, which is so different. We see the reality of that in the New Covenant when His Son appears on the scene. Then we see that God is in Christ. God comes in the flesh and tabernacles among us. This is the burden of the Spirit this day.

Christ the Son is the tabernacle of God and the dwelling place of God now and for all eternity. The dwelling place of God is His Son for all time to come. We must see this more than just a doctrine or truth in the word of God. We need to see it spiritually by our inward man. In other words, the Person is the residence of the Father, not in type but in reality. Christ is God's tabernacle not for a time alone, but for all eternity. One of the names of the Lord is *Emmanuel* which means *God with us*—God tabernacling among His people in His Son.

The tabernacle of Moses, its services, rituals, and even its construction gives us a picture of the Son. We see there His ministry, His sacrifice, and His all-inclusive sacrifice on the cross. He is

the door; He alone is the way unto God. We see Him in the altar and in everything else, for it is all related to this one issue, that of the Lord being there in the tabernacle. We see the Son in every part of the tabernacle. He is there. Therefore, the tabernacle really meant the Lord was with us.

When the tabernacle was being raised, the Lord was specific about everything in the tabernacle. So is God particularly specific regarding all things His church today. The Lord desired that everything should be exactly according to His specifications. In the tabernacle, God desired that everything should present the Son and express Christ. God's desire is the same today. Everything that houses God, the Father, should express the Son. Our lives should be an expression of the Son. Without an expression of the Son, the Father cannot be glorified. The glory cannot come unless the pattern of the Son is truly expressed. The glory did not come because the tabernacle was made according to a pattern set by God, but it came because the pattern itself was the expression of the Son. The glory filled the tabernacle and the Father dwelt there. If we are to have a house where the Father would dwell, then our lives must be an expression of the Son individually as well as corporately.

The tabernacle had many things, and all expressed the Son. When it was completed the Father looked upon it and saw His Son, and the glory of the Father filled the tabernacle. This is very true for the New Covenant where everyone who wants to house the Father must presence the Son. It is precious to see this by the eye of the Spirit. If we desire the glory of the Father to fill the house, we must be an expression of the Son. Unless we become an expression of the Son, the glory of the Father cannot come into this house. That is the design of the Father. The Father is in the Son. Outside of the Son we cannot receive the Son. Things by themselves are of no value to the Father; they become precious and sacred only if they express the Son. There are beautiful places and buildings in the field of religion, but the Lord is not there. One thing that matters to God is that there is an expression of the Son. To that degree will He be present there.

What makes any place the sacred house of God? It is not the building nor is it the congregation, but it is the presence of the Lord alone. It is the person of the Lord that matters—His manifest presence. That is the concern of the Father—that He may be present in the Son. It is the good pleasure of the Father to be present wherever His Son is expressed. History shows that the Father manifested Himself in several places—the reason is that in those places the Son was present.

Where is the tabernacle of Moses now? It may be buried in the earth somewhere. Where is the temple of Solomon? It is nowhere to be seen. They were sacred to God at one time and He preserved it for some time. But when they ceased to fulfill their real meaning and purpose to which they were raised, they were no longer sacred to God. It may have been the place of His name at one time and He sponsored it, but it ceased to be sacred to God. He withdrew Himself and even allowed the heathen to destroy it repeatedly. The divine abandonment of God must teach us one thing—the purpose in all these was that there the presence of the Lord. Men took it as some kind of service to God. They did not realize that it was for God to dwell in the midst of men. How important this is for us. We have known that He has called us and chosen us with a

holy calling (2 Tim. 1:9), not according to our works but according to His own purpose. God in His mercy has revealed to us the purpose in saving our lives. The divine purpose that governs our salvation is that we may be a place for His purpose; that we might be a dwelling place unto the Lord individually and collectively. This is the desire of the Lord—that we may presence the Lord in full measure and house the Lord in all His fullness. It is not some kind of service that the Lord is looking for. He is looking for us to become a dwelling place for His divinity—having an expression of the Son so that He may come down and dwell in our midst.

Many are moving out of the directions and purpose of God in this hour though they have heard this particular word often. Let us remember that God abandoned some of the things He had raised up, and it would take Him no time to move on if we fail to move in His direction. How serious we ought to be with the purpose of God!

The same was in the beginning with God. (John 1:2 KJV)

In the beginning was God. He was not only in the beginning, but right through to the end as per the word of God. He manifests in the Son right through to the end. He is wherever His Son is. That is what we see in the Book of John. God tabernacles with the Son in the midst of the people. We need to understand and be careful that we do not set up false grounds to simulate His presence. Where the Son is the Father is; where there is an expression of the Son, there the Father will be.

Jesus said “Not in that mountain.” The Samaritan woman told Jesus, “*Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.*” (John 4:20, 21) In other words, Jesus told her that the old order is over. It is not here nor is it there; it is where the Son is. It is where the expression of the Son is that we can experience a true worship unto God. There can be no other ground.

In Christianity today everything is made to be so beautiful, so lit up. There are beautiful songs, heavenly singing, and many other wonderful things. People are running by the thousands to such gatherings. Jesus said many will run here and there in the last days. But His true remnant will know where the expression of the Son is, and there the glory of the Father will be manifest. So let us not set up any false grounds—it is all in the Son. If the Lord is there, then the Father is there. Where Christ is, the Father is found. Let us realize and settle it once and for all. Let this apprehend us and govern our lives.

Let us not set up and establish any false grounds for the worship of the Lord and for the presence of the Lord in our lives. It is only on the ground of the Son that the presence of the Father can be found.

There are two important things here. The first thing that relates to His presence is that God always begins with a presentation of His own Son. If we want the Father’s presence, then there is only one way and that begins with a revelation of the Son. A revelation of the Son of God is the basis on which God always begins. That is the way He begins ALWAYS.

The tabernacle was a type and a figure as we know. When an outsider came to the tabernacle, he would not understand anything. But for an Israelite, everything was there in it. The whole life of Israel was around that dwelling place of the Lord—the tabernacle. Everything was in the tabernacle including the expression of the Son. But an outsider would not understand the figures and shadows. God’s creation had an expression of the Son in everything—the first man, the creation of a woman, the first marriage, etc. Paul picks this up and explains it in all in his epistles. In every detail of the creation you can see some detail of the expression of Christ if you have spiritual eyes to see—all is about the Son. In Colossians Paul writes:

Colossians 1:15-19 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.

In every detail we will see that in all things there is the Son in some measure. In other words, all things speak of the Creator. We pass from the things made to the One who made them all. Our hearts should move from seeing all things to the One who made them. That is what God desired of man. What God always wanted for man was that when he saw the creation, he should move from seeing the beauty of the creation to the seeing of the One who made it all. The Son of God did not just make all things objectively, but He put Himself in all things. If our spiritual eyes are open, we will see that in the creation of man, of woman and of all things, in His relationship to man and all that He has for man. God has presented His Son in many wonderful ways. That is where God began in creation in His Son. Without Him nothing was created that was created. It is all in His Son. Without Him nothing was made that was made. Everything is in Him. The Father does not begin anything outside of His Son. The basis of everything is the revelation of the Son. If you want the Father, God’s beginnings are in His Son.

See what the Lord said to Moses:

...Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount. (Hebrews 8:5 KJV)

God has only one object on His mind, and He relates all things according to that object. That object is His Son. So the tabernacle was a typical presentation of the Son in every detail. In other words, Moses was admonished by God to make all things according to the Son that He showed him on the mount. That is what it means. According to the Son I have shown thee on the mount. He could not make any alteration because it was the pattern of the Son Himself. Here was another beginning of God! God’s beginnings are with the revelation of the Son. The beginning was the constitution of a nation—a definite people on the earth. It all begins with the revelation

of the Son shown on the mount. God's basis is the basis of the revelation of the Son. He has no other basis.

This is true with all spiritual progress in life as well. The true opening of our eyes is to see that the Lord is the beginning. God keeps all progress true to the revelation of His Son. There is no progress apart from the revelation of the Son in our lives. It cannot be beyond. The opening of our eyes is so essential if we are to progress in life spiritually. This is also true of all the work and ministry unto the Lord. It all depends upon the measure of the revelation of the Son in our lives.

The Lord Jesus Christ lived according to this vital principle. May God apprehend us afresh.

Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:19 KJV)

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. (John 14:10 KJV)

These verses show that Jesus lived His life in view of the Father. Likewise we can only live this life according to how we see the Lord Jesus Christ. We must live in full view of the Son. That is why these words are difficult to understand and live. When we are brought into the full view of the Son, when we have a revelation of the Son progressively, then we will also come into living that way – according to Christ. We can only live this life as we see the Lord Jesus. As we behold Him, we will begin to move into this life of the Son. As we allow the Spirit to work in us we can live *Him*. Let the Spirit do this work. As we live in full view of the Son, we will be brought into a working of the Spirit within us. There will be a work of God and we will experience it. It is not a matter of striving but of being there. It was not a matter of going to Bible study but of allowing the Spirit to work it out in us.

Remember, every new beginning in our lives will be on the basis of the revelation of the Son. It does not begin with a new message on New Year. That will not work. Every new work of God begins with a revelation of the Son. We cannot do away with the Son. The Father has nothing else to offer to mankind but His Son. Outside of the Son the Father does not provide anything. We can only live this life as we see the Lord Jesus. God is at work in us to this end. It is time to leave all the religious things in our lives.

For a true Israelite everything existed in relation to the dwelling place of God in the tabernacle. The Lord Himself was there. The expression of the Son was there but none from outside Israel could understand it because it was in types and shadows. It made no sense to them. The truth was inside, all covered. The truth was a mystery to them and required the opening of the eyes. The eyes had to be opened to see what was inside. It was all an expression of the eternal Son. It was not a thing itself; it had a divine meaning. God's design was to have gold for the things of gold

and silver for the things of silver. Everything designed by the Father was to express the Son. There could be no alteration to those things for they had a divine meaning.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 KJV)

In other words, John says that they saw Him and therefore they saw the divine meaning. When Jesus was here, He was the tabernacle of God amongst men. He was the very dwelling place of God and the Father housed Himself in Him. But the men of the world saw nothing in Him. Like someone coming to the tabernacle from outside, men found no sense in Jesus, no meaning.

When Jesus, the tabernacle of God, was here men looked at Him and saw no beauty in Him, as Isaiah 53 says. As far as man was concerned there was no beauty in Him

Isaiah 53:2-3 For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

That is the truth. The Jews never understood Him though He was the tabernacle for the Father. People came around Him, heard Him, ate with Him and yet many despised Him. They looked at Him and said, "Can any good come out of this Man?" Some said, "His father and mother we know; he is a mere carpenter; we know his brothers and sisters." The tabernacle of God was covered with humanity, the skin of man. They saw all things from a natural point of view. The Father was still in Him even when men did all that they did to Him. The Father was still in the Son, but He was hidden. He was IN the Son. Behind all the curtains of the tabernacle, the Son and the Father were present. Men saw Jesus but rejected and despised Him who was the reality and the substance.

When John saw Him he said, "*We beheld His glory.*" He said he saw in this tabernacle the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father. It was a revelation to John. To many this Christ does not mean anything, even to many believers, because they have closed their eyes. But the Father is revealing His Son. The basis of the beginnings of God lies in a revelation of the Son. If the church wants the glory of the Father, then everything must be the expression of Christ. May God open our eyes to receive a revelation of the Son.

Our spiritual progress depends upon a revelation of the Son. May we live in the sight and full view of the Father in the Son, just as the Son lived on the earth. Paul says that God revealed His Son in him. This is true for the work, for the ministry, for the church and for each one of us. We must come into beholding the Son in a fresh way. A new apprehension, a new enlightenment is needed to see Christ. It is only an expression of the Son that the Father is looking for. He is present there. God is not looking for an expression of our ideas or views or some gifted person's understanding. It is not what we think that concerns the Lord. The primary thing is the source

from where it comes. Only the Holy Spirit can bring us into the true revelation of the Son, Amen. It is there that the Father will come! He will come where there is a true expression of Christ.

Hebrews 12:26 says, "*Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.*"

The Word says that the things which are shaken will be removed so that those things which cannot be shaken will remain. Everything that is not Christ will be dissolved. Only that which is Christ will remain. How we need to give ourselves to the working of the Spirit. It is so important to be a part of that kingdom that cannot be shaken. That is *Christ*.

Truth in the Inward Parts

*“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. **Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.** Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.*

Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.” (Psalm 51:1-19)

We know this is a Psalm of David and that verse 6 in particular it speaks of truth in the inward parts. Here we find the Psalmist reaching into the depths of sorrow in his own life. He went into the deepest depths of his heart with much sorrow and repentance. He had come into a place of blood-guiltiness in his life. He had committed adultery and murder and was guilty of blood. In all the provisions for sin in the law there is no provision for blood-guiltiness—death alone was the consequence. This is what David was facing day and night. 2 Samuel 11 and 12 tell us of his episode with Uriah and all that came upon the life of David. He knew that there was no provision in the law that could save him, and only the mercy of the Lord could save him from death. Only the mercy of God could go underneath death and save David from death. How true it is. It is only the mercy of God that can go deeper than death. And how truly this applies to us, for we were dead in our trespasses and sins, worthy of death, and to be ever separated from God. Only His mercy could separate us from death. O how we thank God for that saving power of His mercy! David cried out to God because he knew that only Divine intervention and mercy could go deeper than death to save him. The deep calleth unto the deep! Deep suffering calls for deep deliverance and deep salvation. David cried out from his depths because nothing of man or of his own power and provisions could save him. Deep suffering calls for a deep solution, if the

suffering is related to sin. The solution lies in verse six: *“Thou desirest truth in the inward parts”*. To reach that deepest place and His solution, God uses our failures and wrongs.

Progressiveness in God’s Dealings

God’s workings are always progressive and they are always positive. God deals with us in ever deeper ways in our spiritual lives. He uses ever deeper ways to reach into our depths. Down and down He goes till He reaches the bottom so that He gets to the ultimate depths of our lives. He undercuts all our doctrines, our assumptions, our pretensions, our delusions, our customs—He undercuts everything. The Lord keeps dealing with our depths till there is no place for formalism and outward observance of rituals and practices. There is a progressive dealing of God in our lives that is very important to understand. God always works towards truth in the inward parts. He desires and delights in that. That is what He wants to bring in our lives and therefore He undercuts everything, until He reaches the depths and finds truth there.

David realized that there can be no formalism with God. He says in Psalm 51, *“For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering”*. He realized that Jewish ritual could not save him, no outward observance of a law or some ceremony could save him. He realized that God wanted to reach into his depths and purge him. It is there that God wanted to do something. It is only there that God could set David free and deliver him—in the inward parts. This is the desire of God. There is progressiveness in His dealings and workings in our lives. He wants to get right into the innermost being of our lives. He is working towards that. This is the desire of God. We are on the Potter’s wheel and this is what He wants to do with us.

God can meet with us and bless our lives. Many believers want only the things in the realm of blessings and grace. All they want is God’s grace, His blessings, and their needs met, etc. Psalm 1 shows us the blessings that man can have from God. These can be ours. When we trespass, fail, do wrong, we often want only the blessings of God. Israel was not concerned about their iniquities against God, but they were more concerned about their blessings from God. God is not going to force His workings in unwilling lives. But in open vessels God is ever willing to go into the depths and do a deep work in them. God is going to pursue to the most inward place in our being and register His work of grace in every area of our lives. But it will not be done in all of us—only those who are open to Him and who cry out for His workings.

David did not come to that place of truth in his inward parts till he had reached the profoundest, deepest place of need in his life. He did not cry out until he came to the place of failure, to the place of knowing his weaknesses, the deepest place of his worthlessness. If we desire such a work in our lives it is not enough to seek the Lord in ordinary ways. It is not good enough to pray and ask the Lord to work in our life. Nothing can happen in this way as far as the deeper work is concerned. The Psalmist had a deep cry and reached the deepest place of need. Not many of us have reached that deepest part of our need in certain areas of our lives because we have not cried out as we ought to cry out to God. It is not enough to seek the Lord in ordinary ways if we want to see the work of the Lord in our depths. It is not enough to observe the ritual of the Law, and

go through the ceremonies, and carry out all that which is external. David knew that if he observed some sacrifices, it would not really help him.

All our activities, our bible studies, our weekly gatherings will not help us if it is only external. God is looking for something more; ordinary ways will not do. Extraordinary ways are needed that must come from the depths of our lives. The rituals, spiritual exercises, praying and such ordinary things will not help us in any way; the rituals, ceremonies, tithes, helps and all externals will not suffice. He desires truth in the inward parts. The deep needs to call out to the deep. There needs to be a cry from our depths to the Lord and then the Lord will come in and there will be a work of His hand upon our lives.

God is after truth in the *inward* parts, right down into the depths of our being. Why? Why? It is because truth is a major feature and constituent of the Divine nature. God is called the God of Truth; Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Godhead, called Himself the Truth—“*I am... the truth*”; “*To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth*”; the Holy Spirit is described as the Spirit of Truth—“*when He, the Spirit of truth, is come*”. John 16:13 “*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*”

The Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are characterized by this one feature—truth! And God desires and has set His heart upon having people who are partakers of the Divine nature. He is working ever more deeply toward this end: what is true of Himself shall be true of His children—those begotten of Him—that they should be *true* sons of God in this sense. God is set upon having a people who are partakers of the divine nature. So God is at work in us to produce this divine nature in us. He is working ever more deeply towards that end in His remnant. What is true of Him may be true of us. Those who are begotten of Him should be true sons of God. That is why he wants to constitute something in our inward man. This is His desire.

All Untruth Is Satanic

All untruth is characteristic of Satan. Satan is described as a liar and the father of liars. For that reason all untruth is an abomination to God. Let this be a foundation in us. God in His economy has consigned all liars to the lake of fire. He has excluded such from the New Jerusalem. That is why He judges the false church Babylon with such harshness. There is a mixture and a pretension there. The Lord has excluded from New Jerusalem everything that maketh a lie. God has purposed it in His divine economy. He hates that which is untrue. He must have truth in the inward parts.

We can see the interference of Satan in God’s creation in the Garden of Eden. That resulted in man becoming something false, something other than what God had desired. Man is a misrepresentation of God’s mind since that time. He is a deceived creature. Paul says the god of this age has blinded the mind of the unbeliever. Man is deceived and is a blinded creature. But

God desires truth in the inward parts of this man. He wants to do a work in this man and bring him back to a place where he is a right representation of God's work and desires.

The Psalmist was able to see this. When he says 'behold' it means he was looking for it and he found it. It was the sudden apprehending hand of God. This is something that needs to happen in our lives in these days. Our eyes need to be opened to see that God wants to do a work in our inward man. This man who is a misrepresentation, who is more a lie than the truth is the man that God wants to work upon in an inward way. When we talk about the truth in the inward parts we see that it runs right through Psalm 51. Even when he says, *create within me a clean heart*, he is referring to the formation of the truth inwardly. Also when he says, *renew a right spirit within me*, he is referring to the innermost place. David is saying, "Lord let there be no more deception in me. Lord, let there be no more outwardness, make-believe, no more falsehood in my life. I have come to the end of my doings. Nothing mechanical, no more make-believe, no more going as though it is alright when it is not so, no more using external means to cover up the inward unrealities." This was David's desire. No more going to meetings, joining the prayers, attending events when the inward parts are not right. No more falsehood or deception or any outward things to cover up with. A constituting work is necessary in each one of us.

Everything should work towards the constituting of the truth in our inward parts. When we sing a song, knowing that what we sing is not real within us, then what should we do? Those are the times when we should be broken before God. Cry out from our depths and then we can become a vessel of brokenness. A broken heart and broken spirit moves us towards the purity of our inward parts. This does not happen in one day, but a work begins to constitute the truth inwardly. Everything in our lives should work towards bringing about truth in our inward parts. We may take part in many things—the singing, the meetings, the Bible Study, the worship, the prayers—but what has been constituted in us? Something must happen inside. A constituting work must take place in measures. Let us make sure of this.

Anything that does not bring us towards the constituting work of the Spirit is nothing but a false ground. If we just come and go and attend meetings without something being constituted within then we are operating on false ground. If it does not help towards our true constitution it is of no purpose. Anything that would bring us into a form or a ritual from outside and which covers the inner life is false. That cannot stand before God and God hates any such acts that we may do.

The work of God is to reconstitute human nature, by bringing in the truth into our inward parts. May God help us. Surely the road is getting narrower. In His hands we shall become vessels of recovery. He will bring us into the design of His end for His people. This will involve a breaking down in our lives. To reconstitute our inward parts, a breaking down becomes necessary in His hands. The history of God's many dealings with men shows that there was a progressive breaking down in their lives. God gets down to the roots of their lives. God gets down to the place where we shall not be deceived. Man is so deceived that God has to go deep down to undeceive man. God gets down to the deep roots in our lives.

We need to come to some new ground as God is working it out in us. He wants to deliver us from every form of deception. He wants to reconstitute us fully. We have illusions about ourselves. The lives of men of God have shown that when the hand of God came upon their lives, they were delivered of their illusions. When God has finished with us, all our illusions about ourselves will go, though it may be little by little. If we are driven by any kind of falsehood—our position, our background, our education, our work—the hand of God will expose them and remove them. He will break down everything in us until we see ourselves as unclean things. Apart from Him we are unclean and unrighteous.

But there is the other side, of course; there is the building up and constructing work of God that brings us to the place where anything that is false, anything that is not absolutely transparent and true, straight, clear, and righteous becomes hateful to us. Our inner man begins to revolt against our own falsehood. As we remain open to the hand of God, we will find our inner man revolting against any kind of outwardness and falsehood. Blessed are those who experience such a work of the Spirit in their lives. Any kind of exaggeration comes back on us at once with conviction of wrong; any kind of false statement hits us hard and brings about a deep remorse. This is the positive work of the Spirit in us. When we know that we have not spoken the truth there is an immediate desire to be forgiven. It is a tremendous thing to get into the hands of the Holy Spirit. Eventually we will come to a place where the one thing that we hate is to have anything to do with falsehood. *“I hate”,* said David, *“every false way”*. We must come there! We must be lovers of the truth. And this work of God in us will pursue us everywhere; it will pursue us into our own life within ourselves, that we are no longer deceiving ourselves at all.

Truth in Every Area of Life

Truth will pursue us into our social life, and all our lies and make-believe will have to come under the hand of God. Oh, what a tremendous amount of lies and falsehood, make-believe, there is in the social realm. What about all the ‘make-up’? Is it not to show that you are something that you are not, to give a semblance of something that is not true? The whole social life is like that; it is a fabric of untruths, and we have many ways of just saying things that really are not true. Everyone in society is wearing a fabric of untruth today. But God desires to have a people who will have truth in their inward parts. It will pursue us everywhere, including our work places.

And this is a work of time—indeed, it is a lifelong work. This comes more to light, becomes more intense, the further on we go. The Lord lets us off with a lot of things as spiritual infants, as we do with our children. We do not take too much notice of certain things which we know are not quite right. And God is very patient and very tender to bring us on. It would not do to come right in with all the fulness and the exactness of His nature too soon—He spreads it over the whole lifetime. The nearer we come to the Lord, the more meticulous the Holy Spirit is over this matter of truth; the closer are His dealings with us. It is very true, you see, *“perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord”*—perfecting.

The nearer we get to the end, the more stringent will be the Lord's dealings with anything false in our lives. It is a matter of time, but God is very faithful—He is very faithful; He does not let things pass. Do we want Him to be faithful? Well, it is not comfortable to say 'Yes', but it is good that He should be faithful with every inconsistency, every contradiction, every falsehood, in the inward parts. Let us hand over our lives to His faithfulness.

God carries the matter deeper than our own natural, moral life. I am not talking about morals now. It is right to be honest; it is right to have integrity; it is right to be straight; it is right to be true, naturally, humanly; but I am not talking about that. This thing goes deeper than our natural moral life at its best for the simple reason that, by nature, we have not got God's conceptions and God's standards. Paul says in Phil. 3:6 that according to his moral standards he was blameless. There is always an intellectual standard of our own consciousness. God's thoughts about things are very different from ours. We often allow what God would never allow. He has an altogether different point of view about things. We judge in one way about things, and God judges in another way. It is necessary for us to come to God's standpoint.

Oh, we would say, there is no harm in such-and-such a thing. Oh, there is no wrong in that; look at so-and-so and so-and-so, and we take our standard, perhaps, from other people. We have known people to do that; point to some outstanding figure in the work of God, in whose life was a certain thing—that one has been taken as the model, to be copied, and so the thing has been taken on. Oh, there is no harm in it; look at so-and-so. And I have known lives and ministries to be ruined on that very excuse.

The question is: What does the Lord say about it? God says, Walk before Me! Not before any human model; not before any human standard; 'There is no harm in it; so-and-so does it; it is quite a common practice'. No, no! "Walk before Me", says the Lord. We have got to get this in the spirit, the *inward* man. It is deeper than our best moral standards. Otherwise there is no point in it being in the Bible at all, if our moral standards cannot rise to God's satisfaction. Why must we be so handled and reconstituted? It is deeper than our intellect, than our reason. You cannot by reason nor intellect arrive at God's standard at all. Not at all! Oh, do not think that by any method of reasoning, you are ever going to reach God's standard. You never will. Here, it is only by revelation of the Holy Spirit. Christ has got to be revealed in our hearts by the Spirit. There is no point in Jesus saying: "*When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth*" (John 16:13), if we could get there by our own intelligence. Not at all. It must come by the revelation of Christ in our hearts, in the *inward* parts. This is something spiritual. "*God is Spirit; they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth*"—spirit and truth go together. Only what is spiritual, what is of God, is *truth*—only that!

The Apostle Paul had great intellect, as everyone knows, and he had a very high standard of moral life, but he was an utterly deceived man before his conversion. "*I verily thought that I ought....*" "*It was a matter of conscience with me to do many things contrary....*" He was conscientious. He could say as concerning the righteousness which is of the Law, Blameless! There is a moral standard; there is an intellectual standard; there is a conscientious standard! But

it can be all deception. No, that is not the way. It is only by the work of the Holy Spirit Himself in us, changing us, completely changing us. It may be that common honesty and sincerity will be a way along which the Lord can come. I am quite sure, if we are not going to be honest and straight with God, He is not going to meet us, but that will not get us there. He may require a gangway across which He can meet us—a gangway of meaning business with Him, and a gangway of being thoroughly honest with Him. But let us never think that any sincerity of ours will bring us to be partakers of the Divine nature—not at all! “*Thou desirest truth in the inward parts*”, in the deepest realm of our being—in our spirits. If we are in a false position, we are in great weakness, and our foundation will collapse, sooner or later. But the Lord’s way is to deliver us from such a state.

God has provided for us by sending the Holy Spirit: ‘*When He, the Spirit of Truth is come....*’ It’s all a matter of the Holy Spirit as Lord within us, having His place as absolute Lord. His sovereignty over our intellect, over our own moral pride, conceit, and satisfaction is the need. The Holy Spirit will take this thing right down to our depths, thank God.

God will bring us to a place of complete despair on all grounds other than the ground of His mercy in order that He might reach His end, which is His own satisfaction in us—that no flesh should glory in His presence. *He that glorieth shall glory in the Lord.*

A Remnant with a Godward Passion

There are seasons in God and workings in God, and it is for us to be available to God and to use every God-given opportunity in our life to seek His presence. God is at work and we all need to position ourselves to take advantage of what the Spirit is doing and performing in our midst. The heart cry of every saint should be to know Him; the longing of every heart must be to be changed in His presence. This has to come from our inward man. Let us leave aside external things. It is time to set aside religion in every form. Let our cry be, "Lord, when I encounter You, I will never be the same. I long for an eternal habitation with You." Let the cry of our lips be the same as that of Moses, "Lord I will not go lest you go before us." May we as a remnant in this hour join in that passionate cry of Moses. His cry was for the Lord to show him His face and His glory. It was a passionate cry! May that cry be upon our lips in these days. If our heart's passion is for His presence it will light a fire of hunger within us. It will bring a desperation for Him. The Lord will perform a work in us when that hunger is really from our depths. Let us not talk about false hunger and waste our time, but let there be a true longing and hunger for His presence from within. Then we will experience a great work of His hands in our lives. Let our hearts be set towards God in a passionate cry for nothing else but Him alone.

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. (Jeremiah 8:20 KJV)

The Israelites were a people who had been set free from Egypt. God had a destiny for them and had revealed His heart to them. They had a very good beginning but somehow later on they began to harden their hearts toward the Lord. The example of Israel stands as a great warning to us. Let us not think that we are not like them. Paul told the Corinthians that the Israelites stood as a great warning to all those upon whom the ends of the earth have come. Let us watch over the soul-man and the natural man in us that would like to nullify the will and purpose of God in our lives. We must take heed. Many times God's counsel was received with the wrong heart-attitude by the children of Israel. That is the reason they missed God's destiny in their lives. Sometimes we too can have our own ideas and thoughts concerning our destiny, but it is another thing when we have a mentality to correct the word or message that is given to us. It nullifies the very counsel of God and corrupts it. Though we cannot all have the same measure of understanding, and we walk at different levels of understanding and growth in the Lord, yet we need to be careful. We must make sure that no kind of corruption seeps into our lives.

The old Israelite generation chose to embrace all the negative reports of the spies that they had sent to spy out the land. They chose to follow their negative reports and felt safe in adopting the counsels of man. They chose the counsels of men instead of what may have seemed to them to be risky counsels of God. We stand in the same place. The church in the wilderness, which represents the company of God's people, are inclined to believe negative reports and receive the counsels of men instead of the counsels of God. We are drawn towards the opinions and ideas of men and opt out of the counsels of God which appear to us to be risky.

The history of Israel shows that a whole generation died in the wilderness and never reached their destiny in God. They never wanted to step into the waters of transition. They never wanted to enter into the rivers of Jordan. They were skeptical about the waters of transition that could bring them into the purpose of God. Today in the spiritual world many are similarly afraid of transition. They want to continue in their own ideas. They want to do things within their own parameters of organized systems and religions. But God is causing a remnant to come into the waters of transition, a remnant which is able to believe the “riskier” counsels of God. What a terrible tragedy and deception we see today. It is the mercy of God to keep us in a place of transition and growth. Some may be afraid, but if we are to possess what God has for His people, then we must enter the waters of transition. It is time for us to step into these waters. Rivers are to be crossed; they are not meant to drown God’s people. The rivers we come across are meant to be crossed and God in His mercy will cause His people to do so.

In Joshua’s time the people were asked to cross the river Jordan when it was overflowing. But that generation failed to step into those waters. They were afraid to cross the river and thus failed to enter into what God had for them. Beloved, it is time for us to enter into the waters of transition. God will take us across. Many are being deceived. Believers gather in churches that are beautiful and make it seem as if God is present in everything they do. God’s people seem to be occupied with right things today but God is not impressed with all those things because those things are not for Him but for our own glory. The things they do impress man. The buildings, the decorations, the arrangements, the declarations are all done to impress man. They are for us and not for God. This is where we need to be different in our lives.

Everything we are involved in should be done with the idea of impressing the Lord. He comes to our meetings in response to our hunger only, not for our music, or to sponsor our programs. He comes to us in answer to the desperation of His people. A brokenness in the earth creates an opening in the heavens. He says the earth is His footstool (Isaiah 66).

Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? or all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. (Isaiah 66:1, 2 KJV)

The religion and activities of men have overridden this word. Let us come back to that again as that is what impresses the Lord. All the things we provide in churches are for our own comfort for He does not come for outward provisions. Let us understand that. What impresses Him is the condition of the inward man. Is there a hunger and yearning for Him and for His person? The Lord is there wherever two or three are gathered together with that hunger and longing for Him. He comes to our meetings in response to the hunger of His people. Let the religious things we are used to not obscure our view of God.

Radical praise brings His radical presence. That is what we see in Bartameus’ life. He reached out to Jesus with all the passion, hunger and desperation of his being. And he arrested the attention of Jesus; the whole possession, the whole movement of Jesus came to a halt. Let not the

religious things that we are used to obscure the life of the Lord Jesus. We are only tasting the fringes of what God has for us. There are greater realms that God will cause us to experience. Many people gather together in many places to proudly display their accomplishments before God. And in the light of their accomplishments and achievements, they seek the Lord. They reach out to Him in their works not realizing that we bring our pile of filthy rags to Him to be blessed of Him. The Scripture says that all our righteousness is filthy rags—all our accomplishments, everything that man can do. That which was not originated in the Lord is not acceptable to the Lord. This tells us how careful we ought to be when we come before Him. In many places people bring their tithes and offerings to the Lord. And they make a great display of these things as if that is what the Lord needs. What the Lord needs is us, our hearts and our all. Instead of laying our own lives at His feet to seek His face, they return to their homes with a great sense of satisfaction of giving God what they thought He needed. What God desires of us is to lay our lives at His feet knowing that He is the true source of all wealth. He is made unto us all things.

We thank God that we can give God what He has given us. We must be careful not to derive some kind of satisfaction from this. We may be satisfied in giving to Him, in coming before Him, in worshipping Him but never bringing our very lives to Him and setting our faces to the Lord who is the source of life. Many are in a place of doing all the right things in their lives but they miss the Man in their lives. God has to break our mentalities before He can break forth and manifest His presence in us and among us.

These are the days of transition and change. We must be ready to enter the waters of transition. Let us embrace the “riskier” counsels of God rather than the safer counsels of man. How many times we are drawn to the counsels of man! God has to break our mentalities, our artificial and human intelligence, even fake and artificial spirituality. We need to get rid of many things.

The Lord must demolish all fake artificialities in us. We must cry out in all humility for His hand upon our lives. Thank God His hand is upon some of us, and His hand is coming upon many others. Not much will be left of our self-power when His divine hand enters our lives with His fire. When His fire comes to examine our lives, not much will be left over. God desires to perform a work upon all of us. But we know He will not push the door open. Let there be a genuine hunger. There can be no pretensions in this realm. There are no shortcuts, no equations, no formulas, and no easy ways. History shows that God’s people have gone wrong when God came forth in some way. God’s people thought of some equations, they came out with some formulas, but it does not work. Our desire for Him may be godly and right, but many times our methodology is not. With our God the methods are as important as the work itself. The means to the end is as important as the end itself.

When Satan seduced Eve, he was merely offering Eve an artificial and illegal means to be like God. You shall be like Him he said. That is how he approached Eve. God’s intention was that Adam and Eve would be like Him. That was God’s will and Satan was not wrong in mentioning it. But it was the means to this end that he played around with to deceive them and brought

death. We may have right desires but the methods we use are most important. We cannot make equations in this. We have to depend upon the Lord. We have to be open and seek the Lord that God may create openings. As we reach out to God let Him have His way.

The Lord has moved in us in many ways and we have experienced His presence in many ways. And many times the feeling within us is to return to the old place. Our desire often is to go back to that song, that moment when God had reached out and touched us and we had experienced an explosion of His presence. We think that it had worked once and therefore it will work again. But it will not, because He is a sovereign God. His great wisdom is so different. We think we can use that song again to open the door to His presence, but we find that God has moved the door to the secret place. He has changed the point of access so that our worship and praise does not become an empty ritual. He has shifted the point of entry because He does not want our relationship to be one of ritual. Let us learn this lesson. He does not want us to come to Him out of an empty ritual commemorating something that happened at one time in our lives. That is His great wisdom. God wants us to knock at the right door. He wants us to find a freshness in His presence. When we meet Him, He wants us to look for Him and not depend on some past occurrence. To be found in Him is tremendous and when we find Him it is also tremendous. It is not a matter of coming to church on Sunday with a hunger for His presence, but it talks of something being done in us that is different from before. May God help us.

God wants to preserve the joy and freshness of our encounters with Him. Formulas and equations can never meet His need. If we deeply yearn for His fresh deposits, He will certainly come in. He does not come and put it all before us in one time. He sends His freshness in small, fresh dozes and deposits—not all in one go. He comes in waves of His own deposits. That means the Lord wants us to be constantly in a place of hunger. He comes in waves of His presence, in fresh deposits so that we may be in a place of hunger perpetually.

Sometimes after a meeting I have felt that we had missed something of His presence. I asked the Lord why it was so. We had done the right things but we had a sense of not having received what we ought to have. God wants our hunger to be maintained constantly in us. That is what God desired of Israel. They were dissatisfied and weary. Why didn't God provide them manna for a week at a time? Manna was given to provide greater hunger but it did not work out that way in their lives.

We are experiencing the presence of the Lord so that a greater deposit of His presence is created in our hearts. God wants us to be in a place of expectation, hunger and longing for His presence. Our hunger must go beyond religious activity and the framework of our belief and expectation. It is not a matter of attendance in a right manner. God wants to bring us into the fulfillment of the purpose of God. We must have an uncontainable hunger to have fellowship with an uncontainable God—continually. Let change be your portion. It comes along with death. He brings it and He knows the change we need. If there is a hunger, He will bring it around. He has the power to do that.

The Lord came very purposely to meet with the woman at the well in chapter 4 of John's gospel. She was touched by the Lord's presence.

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. (John 4:39 KJV)

The woman encountered the living presence of the Lord and His presence changed her life. "Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am **he**." (vs. 26) The disciples came immediately after that.

John 4:28-29 The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?

What brought a change in her life? She was just in the presence of this Man. That is what changed her. She encountered the moving well of God. She told the people how His presence brought changes in her life. She shared it with the people and they desired to see Him. There were two categories of people—a people who experienced His presence and a people who had a hunger for His presence. God does not want anyone to just carry on because they are members of the church or have been coming here regularly. God has brought us here with a purpose and those who have experienced Him in some measure must see whether it is bringing forth some hunger.

So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. (John 4:40 KJV)

The experience of this woman whose life was changed by the presence of the Lord brought a hunger to the hearts of some people. Everyone in the city did not come, but the ones who were open came. They besought Him and asked Him to tarry with them. And He abode with them two days, praise the Lord. They desired for Him to stay with them. Does the declaration of God's word by those who have encountered the Lord in some measure, who have come to the Living Well in some new measure, produced a hunger in some lives?

I know that God is at work and some hearts have been drawn towards the Lord. They have come to a place where they sought the Lord and asked Him to tarry with them. And the Lord did tarry. It is happening here in some measure. But we must have an open heart for this. If we want to go on with an outward thing, we can do the right things and yet miss Him.

Saints, let us not take some religious steps before God. Get hungry for God. He will be there. Is something happening in your life? Is something happening deep within or are you just a part of a gathering? Are you just speaking some words in sharing His word as we gather during the week or is there a deep change taking place? May God help us to examine our lives. Let us be honest with ourselves and with God.

After spending two days with them they said, "Now we believe."

John 4:42 ...And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Now we believe, now we know, not because of the Sunday messages, not because of others have told us that His presence can change us, but because we have experienced His presence in our lives. His presence means change. Now we know what it means to be with Him. It was not a proud statement but an expression of their experience. That is what we need. To know His presence experientially.

Let us be brutally honest and not fake a hunger, or imitation. It is our hour in the Son. Let us not miss it. The harvest has ended, the summer is over, but we have not been saved. Let this not happen to us.

Will you beseech Him? It is out of our little experience we say that we have experienced Him. If you urge Him to tarry He will tarry and He will abide. Then you too will say, "Now I know what His presence means." You will see the difference. It is an experience with the Living Water.

In 2001 the Lord did a new work in me and brought a confirmation when I ministered the word to others. I can turn back to that time specifically when the Lord spoke to me about His presence. The Lord had been preparing me for He was speaking about the revelation of His person for a couple of years and I can tell you that something different took place in my being. My whole perspective began to change and is being changed even today. I know He is the center and He is the focus. Even in ministering the word there was a change. I am apprehended afresh and I realize that I am not ministering to you but I am ministering to God. A different focus and change has come about me. God has been sharing about worship to us from 1999 onwards, but I thank God for the change that has come about in the last two years. This is my testimony. God is doing a work in our lives. He is changing our perspective.

Many times I have felt that corporately we come short of true worship. Why is it? May we have that hunger! The word of God is not to be taken as something that is merely shared but not experienced. We need to be sensitive in our lives. We must depend on the Lord and focus on Him – to be on the ground of the Son. Every time when we gather we must come with one thing in our heart. Will the Lord show up this time? Will He manifest Himself with His fresh deposit? Lord will this be a day of a fresh encounter with you? That is the heart we must have when we walk into the house of God. We cannot do so if we have not walked like that from our house. Lord will this be a day when I will meet you in an encounter? If this is not our heart then why do we gather? We have missed many years though we talked about worship and taught worship to others. Now it is different. Lord will you be there? When we come together with that kind of heart our gatherings will be different.

Today the appetite for entertainment has taken hold of the church. Many worship services are such that the soul and the body are satisfied outwardly. This should be the governing factor in our lives: When will you show up again Lord? —that should be our disposition. Lord will it be

today—this morning? Will we see a greater dimension of Your presence? Never underestimate the power of one moment in His presence. Just a few seconds of His manifest presence turned a murderer called Saul into a martyr called Paul. It will alter a change of our destiny. My prayer is, “Lord, let that uncontainable hunger, that incredible hunger and the fire of God with passion overtake my life in these days. Let a Godward passion overtake and overshadow my life.” Let us seek Him and not hold back. Let us tell Him that we are hungry just for Him. Let us say, “I refuse to retreat, Lord.”

Let it not be said of us that the harvest is over and we have not been saved.

Brokenness Is God's Favorite Perfume

“He that cometh to God must believe that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”
(Hebrews 11:6)

If the element of diligence is missing in our lives then we cannot be counted among those who have been rewarded by God. We cannot receive a reward from the Lord if we are not diligent. It has to do with the condition of our hearts. God is not seeking any kind of heart; He is seeking a certain kind of a heart that would seek Him diligently.

God-chasers become God-catchers when they begin to measure time in terms of absence. God catchers measure their time according to His manifest presence in their lives. Passion does not measure itself by the time of a clock. Passion measures time by the absence of the person. When we know that those who are close to us are away from us, then we feel their absence by the measure of time they are away. Time moves very slowly when we are hungry for the presence of the Lord. When we long for His presence our time inches forward very slowly and painfully. So this is the way passion takes us. May God help us to see this. We need a heart of that kind. We must seek the face of the Lord with passion, just wanting to be there where we can meet Him and experience His fresh presence. To be where the one you long for is present must be the only desire of the heart. This is what true passion will do in us. Let us examine and check our hearts towards Him.

Imagine you are shopping along with your child. You ask him to stand and wait at one place while you go to another rack to pick up some item. Even so it is with the Lord. There are times we are called to wait because He has promised to return. We gather together because He has told us that where two or three are gathered there He is. This is like a parent would say to his child, “Wait and I will be right back.” That is the way we need to come together—waiting longingly for His manifest presence. This is the kind of heart we must have. The attitude and mentality of a hungry heart shuns religious order, but waits for the One who has said He will come back.

Let there be an anticipation within us to wait for Him to come and meet us. The moment the object of our worship comes before us we need to catch the glory of His face and move into His presence. There are many things that have to be removed from within us. Sometimes when we come to the house of God we come with another spirit. We meet with many spirits. They come along with us. We come with a spirit of heaviness. We bring our situations, our problems, and it not only affects us but the whole gathering. As long as we are on the earth, we will have problems and troubles but we should not bring them to the House of God to trouble others. We have trials and situations but we should remain inwardly focused in our lives. When we come together we must have one desire before us, “Lord I want to meet with you.” We do not come together for any other reason—not to meet the need of an organization or anything else. He is the object of our coming together for worship. We must come with one spirit and press into His presence. To be in His presence must be our only motive. Let us not assemble with different spirits but with a heart that is passionate for the Lord. Let that govern our gatherings!

When we wait upon Him in desperate hunger and passion, even the silent waiting is a type or worship. We have heard and learned before that waiting on God is not constant asking. Many believers think that waiting on God means constant asking, but waiting is an art of perpetual anticipation of the next moment. It is a purposeful anticipation of the next moment. This is what waiting must mean to us. We wait for Him and anticipate His movements. We wait for any change in His expressions to know what He would desire of us.

As we have seen in the Psalms, *“The Lord is near to them who are of a broken heart and He delivereth him who is of a contrite spirit.”* God is attracted towards such lives, even to the pitiful side of your personality and your life. God is not attracted to our strengths, for all our righteousness is like filthy rags before the Lord. Many times when we are right we go wrong in our lives. We begin to do wrong things when we are right. We shout at others when we know we are right. In other words, the Lord is repelled when you think you are at your best. He is drawn towards those who are of a broken heart. He is repelled by you at your best. This is why we see that almost all the men of God were broken men. This is the reality. When problems and pains come your way, turn them to altars. When difficult situations come to us, we must turn them to altars. This is what we see in the word of God. We need to spread our wings of worship in those moments. We need to spread our wings of worship over our obstacles. We need to turn our brokenness into songs of desperation and chase after the Lord—never sitting in gloominess, or sitting in self-pity, but transforming those situations into opportunities to chase the Lord. Divine desperation will bring a change.

We have the promises of God. We are to keep our toes on the edges of God’s promises and stand still and see the salvation of God in our lives. Sometimes we may have to worship the Lord at midnight or when we are facing some pain. The reality of the situation exists but the Lord wants you to turn to Him and let your passion seek after the Lord. And the fragrance of your brokenness will draw Him to you. This is what you will experience if you break the alabaster box at His feet. Something of His presence will radiate toward you. This is something we have to experience in our own lives. When we hear the screams of our child we know that he is right there. Nothing summons the heavenly Father more than the screams that come from the backyard of the earth. He is there to attend to the broken hearts in us. He will come. The problem is that as we get older we usually try to preserve our dignity. As we grow we have the arrogance of growth coming into our lives. This is something to be careful about. The arrogance of our growth, the attitude to preserve our dignity as we grow can hinder us from experiencing His life. That is why we must be like little children, like a toddler desiring to experience the presence of the father. This is something we must maintain in our inward man in these days.. We need to discard our dignity so that we can regain our intimacy with our father. We must be careful therefore not to be arrogant so that we do not miss out on His presence.

Only dead men can see His face. There is a principle there. The reality of death and the cross brings death. The closer you are to death, the closer He is to us. If only we could say good-bye to ourselves can we say hello to Him. It is difficult to say bye to the sticky trio, me, myself and I.

They are very sticky and slippery. We must realize that this is where God would like to work in our lives. Those who are open will receive this counsel. Let us examine our lives. The measure of His presence will so much depend upon the measure of death working in us. We have to say good bye to the self in many ways. There is so much to be done in that realm. God is faithful to take every yielded life and help us to say good bye to many things. Where the alabaster box is being broken, He is faithful to lead us to further breakings. When He hears the sound of breaking of the alabaster box He will leave and come to us. He will come. He will never despise a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

He will not respond to a halfhearted prayer or to the sound of a casual praise or a religious practice going on. He won't leave His throne to respond to those things. But He will leave His throne and respond to those who come to Him with divine desperation, a holy hunger, those who cry out with desperation, saying "I want you Lord and nothing else do I desire." We must be reduced to only that cry of our heart. Let me ask you, "How hungry are you? What is your cry for—is it for Him or many other things?" Every time we gather to worship corporately, we may have to remind ourselves to plead His presence in our lives. This is the kind of heart we must maintain. Make sure we come before Him with a thirsty cry, 'as the deer panteth'. But if there is no thirst in your heart then that song cannot flow from your heart. "*As the deer pants for the water, so my heart pants for you*" was the cry of the psalmist. Make sure that we come hungry, thirsty and dry to Him. Come before Him as one who is empty and see what He will do.

Experience Him for He is the rewarder of them who diligently seek Him. We are used to many kinds of terms and terminologies to show how we prayed and cried out to Him. Let God be true and everyone be a liar. His word clearly tells us that He is the rewarder of those who are hungry and thirsty for Him. Let us stand firmly by this word of His. Let God be true. It can never be that you have been empty and thirsty and dry and God has not rewarded you with His mercy and presence. It can never be other than that which God has said. See what you will experience for who is there who can point a finger at God to blame Him? He is the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Our job is to be hungry for Him.

What happens when there is fire without fuel? God has the fire but where is the fuel? God is waiting for something to happen. He is waiting for the fuel. Our job is to become the fuel of God. He has the fire and wants to light the fire but where is the fuel of God? We need to approach His presence with a burning desire. God's fire does not fall upon empty altars. We have altars but they are dead and there is no fuel there. How do you expect the fire to come if the fuel is not present? Be the fuel of God and see if the fire will come.

When people asked John Wesley why people were touched by his preaching he said, "I gave myself to God and people came to see me burn." Let us make sure that we are dry, thirsty and wanting before we come into His presence. Let us not be empty altars when we come to worship Him. How dry are you, how hungry are you, how frustrated do you feel? In this pursuit you come across many struggles and problems and painful situations and frustrations. It is in frustrations that the anointing of God is sent. This is what encourages me. The anointing is

dispatched to the address of the frustrated heart. We all go through situations, so many things, and sometimes even the ministry brings such frustrations. God sends His anointing to such and I am grateful and thankful that in the midst of these frustrations God has kept me in a place of hunger and thirst for Him. That is one thing that I am really thankful to God for. If the hunger for God is lost then what will happen? Hunger is the process that keeps your spirit and body alive. Let us never lose the hunger He gives us. God places hunger in the hungry. Yes, this we can experience and be grateful to Him for that hunger. To him that has more, more will be given, says the Lord. More will be given to him that does not have. From him who does not have, He will take away to give him who has. What a tragedy that would be. But let God place hunger in us because we have a hunger. Let a lower degree of passion be turned to a higher degree of burning in these days.

Turn the knob of your passion as high as you can in these days. Be determined to go all the way. Let your determination be much more. Like David who said to His wife as he danced before the Lord, "*Yet more will I dance*". He turned the knob of his passion to a higher degree. That is the attitude we need. Be ever grateful for the hunger you have. Let there be a growing desperation. If you are not happy with all that is happening and the way things are in your life, then you are only minutes away from a breakthrough in your life. Pray with a hungry heart not to be satisfied with any other thing. Let there be a divine desperation within. Maintain a brokenness and you will experience a newness in Him.

If you really want His presence, brokenness is His favorite perfume. Tears are His favorite anointing. He cannot resist the fragrance of the perfume that comes from a broken heart. In this pursuit for the Lord we come across many situation and things begin to happen in the path. Pull that situation towards you, embrace it; offer it to the Lord. Embrace the difficulty instead of murmuring. And you will see Him right there in your life. We may think "How can it be?" However, as soon as you offer the situation to the Lord you will experience the Lord right there. Though the situation may be a minor one, if you offer it to the Lord you will sense His presence in your life. He cannot deny a broken heart when He sees it in our lives. He shows up. When He sees that you have put on that fragrance once again, then He will reach down to you. Just be here with that fragrant spirit. Turn it to the Lord and be caught up with the Lord. When the brokenness rules our lives despite the situation then there is a warmth towards the Lord. He shows up. He does not revel in our pain; He does not play with our pain and sorrow. But He does respond to brokenness. Most definitely He responds.

God does not come to us because we have problems. It is not right to think that the more the problems we have, the closer He is to us. But He comes because we are tender and broken within. If we can learn to remain in that tender place of brokenness without the necessity of contradictory circumstances, then it is good for us. Then we don't have to have circumstances to remain broken. Sometimes God sends circumstances to us to maintain a certain level of brokenness, but it is another thing to remain in a state of brokenness within. To maintain the state of brokenness is of great profit. We see this reality in the lives of some saints. They did not need

circumstances to keep themselves broken. God kept them in a state of brokenness by giving them sorrow inwardly. God does that in His wisdom.

There is a self-induced brokenness where you maintain that brokenness towards God yourself, without situations being brought into your life. As you progress, circumstances will come into your life because you are walking in this path. That is one thing. But God sometimes takes you through circumstances because of His love. He wants to keep us in a place of brokenness. Either way His intention is that His people remain in a state of brokenness. He does not come merely because we experience a situation that breaks us. Problems and difficult situations are a part of this fallen human race. There is pain and sorrow because we are a fallen people. But God is not drawn towards hearts broken because of that. We must maintain a brokenness because of our godly sorrow. We maintain a heart of repentance and brokenness with godly sorrow and not because of circumstances. Godly sorrow worketh repentance. Situations bring more brokenness where brokenness is already present. That is very precious. When faced with a tough situation we need to see that it is another opportunity to maintain brokenness before the Lord. Let us long to meet Him again with godly sorrow and brokenness whenever we have a difficult situation. Have you been baptized in brokenness? Difficult situations present us a fresh opportunity to come before the Lord with godly sorrow. As you face the problems, say in your heart, "Lord, you will come any moment now. It won't be long. I am going to have another encounter with you as I am baptized in sorrow."

The Lord runs towards a broken heart but we run away from Him. Let us point our lives towards Him. Let us bring all situations to Him. Don't come under the weight of that situation but look upon it as another opportunity to meet Him. Many times we withdraw from the Lord when we come under some pressure. Reason takes hold of us and we flee; but let us rather spread our wings before Him and seek His face. Allow the presence of the Lord to open a new window for you and He will.

The people who seem to be hungriest are the same people who know how to worship Him in spirit and truth. Those who appear to be the hungriest are they who know how to worship Him. They have learned to hunger and persevere more than others. They have learned to hunger and thirst for Him—the same one they worship and adore. Learning to hunger and thirst for more of the Lord is precious. Mary who anointed the Lord with her tears gave what she could to the Lord. Church for many is what we can get out of it. That is not the church but what you give to the Lord. What is the church in the midst of us?—what we have given to the Lord. But today we look at church as something from which we can get something for ourselves. This woman had a different attitude. She gave her all to the Lord. When He smells the fragrance of broken hearts He draws nigh. The Psalmist says, "*He is near them who come to Him with a broken heart.*"

In our meetings we may feel the presence of the Lord and be under the cloud of His glorious presence, but afterwards you do not feel the fragrance of the Lord any more. You were enjoying the fragrance of the Lord due to someone else's brokenness and not your own. That is why you have nothing to carry home once you leave the gathering. We may enjoy His presence during the

meeting but if the fragrance did not come from you but from someone else then you have nothing to take home. You may never know whose brokenness brought the fragrance. We need to see that there is an impartation of life. God's manifest presence will go home only with those whose brokenness has summoned the Lord. If there is no brokenness and no fragrance from our lives, then His touch will not last long; it will be blown away.

God will not force Himself on you. That is not something to be happy about. It would be a sad state if it were so. Let your brokenness bring in His fragrance in our midst. Let us not depend on someone else's brokenness to experience the fragrance of His presence. The one whose brokenness has summoned the Lord will take the fragrance of His presence home with him. The presence of the Lord will not end when the meeting is over! There will be a carry-over effect of His presence. Some of us take back His presence from our meetings and spend the whole night in weeping before Him—the presence of the Lord is so strong that it prolongs into the night. Their worship is not confined to Sunday's worship. The ministration of God goes on well through the night. His work upon their lives continues. After Mary anointed the Lord and went home, she smelled like Him. Wherever she went, she carried that fragrance of His presence and smelled like Him. Saints, God wants us to experience this. It is so precious. That is the way we can continuously be in His presence, meeting after meeting, without losing the sense of His presence when we are occupied with some household chores or some office work.

Do you desire such God-encounters in your life? Do you desire the God-encounter that will go with you to your home? Let that be your prayer. Let us be those who break our alabaster boxes. The Lord will not break our alabaster boxes even if we fast for forty days. We have to break it before the Lord.

Mary sacrificed her future for His present presence. What will you sacrifice for His present presence? Will it be an empty box or an empty altar. If it does not cost you anything then it means you are depending on someone else's brokenness and worship. Worship that costs you nothing is fruitless. But the worship that costs you goes back with you home. You decide whether you will take back something or not. How long will you depend upon someone else's brokenness bringing in the fragrance of the Lord? Determine within yourself to take home that worship, that presence of God that you have experienced.

The Direction of Our Spiritual Gaze

Proverbs 4:23-27 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

The counsel of God is to keep our eyes right on, to keep our hearts with all diligence, to ‘*let thine eyes look right on*’, to ponder the path of thy feet and let all thy ways be established, turn not to the right or to the left. The Lord’s desire for us is to look straight ahead and move on.

Hebrews 12:1-2 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him down at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Hebrew writer says for us to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. For a man in Christ there are clear and definite objectives in the Word. We see that from cover to cover in the Bible. The Spirit has shown this in the Bible in many places very clearly. This truth is brought forth to God’s people continuously, urging believers to set their lives in the context of the Word of God and to realize that their lives are set in the context of God’s eternal purpose. Our lives are not something apart but stand in relation to His eternal purpose.

There is a goal; there is a prize. We have been called with high purpose—a purpose so great that the Spirit of God has considered it worthwhile to fill the Bible with the truth of it and with the continuous urge in relation to it. For the Bible from beginning to end has to do with a course in relation to a goal, an end, a prize; it is just brim full of Divine speaking concerning Divine purpose, a very great purpose. We find this, of course, in a very strong way in this letter to the Hebrews, with its insistent call—“*Let us go on*”. Moreover it gives us the great ground of confidence that the end can be reached, the goal attained, the prize received, the purpose accomplished, in that Christ has got there. Jesus has already gone this way and is there, and He has gone the whole way, the same way as you and as all those who are called according to His purpose are called to go. He has taken our level, accepted all that we have to know or may know on the course, and has gone through to the end. The fact is stated that He is there, and His being there is a tremendous triumph, for it is the assurance that we can be there also.

The letter to the Hebrews not only appeals to us to move on to the goal that is set before us and to live our lives in the context of God’s purpose, but it portrays Christ as the great example. It also portrays Christ as the proof that the goal can be reached in our lives. This has greatly encouraged my own heart. Jesus Christ has gone this way; He has gone the whole way and He has arrived at the destination. Praise God for this! He did not stop anywhere in between. Not that He did it all for Himself, but He did it all for us as well. By His accomplishments He has given us the confidence that the goal can be attained and the prize can be received by us. The Scripture

says that He took upon Himself our humanness and accepted the challenges that comes from our circumstances and experiences, but never faulted till He reached the divine end. He prayerfully fulfilled God's purpose. He offers us the assurance that we can share in His triumph and we can reach our destiny.

The Hebrew writer says, "*Looking unto Jesus*". It is His person and His presence that will bring us into this land progressively, even this year. Our eyes must be set upon the Lord as never before, looking unto Jesus. It is also a posture, a condition to begin within our own heart. The Scripture says "*looking unto Jesus*". A more appropriate translation says, "*looking off unto Jesus*". This is what it really means in a closer translation of the original. The Amplified Bible says, "*looking away from all that would distract from Jesus*". So it is looking away and looking at Jesus. This is what the Lord would counsel us even at this time. It is a matter of the direction of our spiritual gaze which is of utmost importance if we are to reach our destination. The Word says that first we are to keep our eyes off many things if we are to keep our eyes on Him.

Many have gone off this course. Paul says that his deep desire is to finish the course. Many have gone off the road of God's will and moved into many other things. God is giving this counsel to us that we may be saved from things that would take us off the road, and that we may be saved from going away from the main road. We need to see and examine our direction. We must be very careful to see that our eyes are held in the right direction. This is the Lord's counsel in the beginning of the year itself, that we may avoid looking in some other direction in our lives, that our look will be towards the Lord and not unto many other things, that we may be brought into those things that God desires to bring us into. Many times we miss the real work of God because of our insensitivity and we miss out on the wisdom of God. In small things we miss the initiatives of God. We see that in the beginning things go well with us in the calling, but not later on. Paul reminds believers about this. They were ready to pluck out their eyes and give them to Paul—such was their commitment. But after some time there came a heart that began to question things. This is the danger that we always face. There is a continuous danger of looking some other way, than the way of the Lord.

The Perils of Looking the Wrong Way

(a) The Backward Look

Looking at things of the past does not help us. This is not a strange word; there is a need for this counsel. Some people, even those here, have not moved on with God because of a backward look, because of looking at those things they had left at one time. They were supposed to look away from the past and look on to Christ. I will not try and illustrate this for it is likely that I could be misunderstood. Our eyes need to be away from the past and on to the Lord. And because we have not done so, we are just like the Galatians and could go back into the things of unrighteousness. We may not go back to that terrible world, but our hearts may turn to something else of the religious past. There are things we have left behind with our friends and relatives,

with associations, with churches of the past, harmless and nice, but we had come away from them at one time to move on in the Lord. May God help us to understand this.

Whatever advance we have made in our spiritual experiences we need to be careful. There seems to be a point that the Holy Spirit wants to bring to us to. If we ever take our eyes off the Lord we are in danger. This is what the Lord has for all of us. The pressure is on us to progress. I think if there had been no pressure on the Israelites they would never have moved on. Only when they came across pressing situations and circumstances in life did they consider moving forward. May God help us never to indulge in the backward look. Was this not the counsel of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians? He urged them to run towards the mark that they may win. This is what he urged the Philippians. And he also urged Timothy and Titus to press on with their lives. There were many things that came upon Paul to turn back.

(b) The Look Around

This is also a look that we must avoid. God's determination is to bring us in. The cry of my heart to God is to help me. It is not in the strength and the ability of man. May we realize this more than we do that our eyes may be fixed upon Him and that we may run after Him. We must *'look off'* all the circumstances around us, looking unto Christ. The example of Israel illustrates this. The spies went in to the land and ten of them brought back an evil report because they 'looked around' in that land and never measured those things in the reality of the power of God that had brought them out of the land of Egypt with mighty works. The giants were real, the fortified cities were real, the difficulties were real, but they did not gaze upon the One who told them that the land is theirs. They did not look at their surroundings in the light of the promise of God. They gazed upon the surroundings and the circumstances instead of the One who counseled them and had performed great things in their lives. They lifted their eyes from the One who had brought them out but instead looked at the surrounding things. That is what happened to the ten spies. Their discouraged hearts discouraged God's people; but two of them continued to gaze upon the Lord and they went through to the end in their lives. As we read in Proverbs 4, their eyes looked right on, and their ways were established (verse 24). This is what God will do if our eyes look right on and straight on. The Lord will establish our ways. We must view everything in the light of this purpose and calling. This is very important.

Another man who looked around is Peter in Matthew 14. Peter desired to walk on the water to go to Jesus. When he was beginning to walk on the water he took his eyes off the Lord and looked around and he went down (Matthew 14:28-31). His eyes changed their direction and he began to look around "*WHEN HE SAW the wind*" (verse 30). Peter looked upon the Lord and as long as he looked upon the Lord he walked upon the water. The moment he took his eyes off the Lord he began to sink. There were plenty of reasons for that fear in Peter. One of the reasons was the strong wind. But what really happened was that he allowed outward circumstances to distract his attention from the Lord. This is what happens to us. Our inward focus on the Lord must be maintained even in the midst of outward circumstances. Circumstances in our lives bring a distraction to our inward focus. We need to lean and trust the Lord. The Apostle Paul's life was

ridden with so many circumstances but he remained in an inward focus. He says that none of these things moved him but he moved on in the Lord. Your progression depends upon your focus and the direction upon which you are looking. We should never move out of that focus and may the Lord help us. It is a matter of the heart and of guarding our hearts in the direction of the Lord. At all cost we must maintain that inward focus upon the Lord. Many things come into our lives even without looking to the Lord through the enemy. Don't go around looking for things. The enemy brings situations into our lives to distract us. And let us not add to that by bringing situations into our lives that would be the cause of our distraction. If we are a true disciple of the Lord and moving on then we will have no time for any other thing. Many have made a shipwreck of their lives, and missed the goal because they looked elsewhere.

(c) The Short-sighted Look

Paul told the Corinthians that they had limited their vision. 2 Corinthians 4:18 says that the things that are not seen are eternal. People are often short-sighted and happy with some spiritual things and not the whole counsel of God. They are short-sighted. He told them that their look was much too near. They had a very small horizon about them. They were not able to appreciate God's eternal plan for their lives. Many have settled down to the limited areas of their spiritual lives. They are easily satisfied. The apostle said, 'You only see what is immediately before your eyes, your vision is merely of things near you, these are the things that influence you'. Too short a range of vision leads to your life becoming smaller than the Lord would have it; you become far too easily satisfied and content in the realm of the things of the Lord; you have a small, narrow horizon—you are not looking right on. Things nearby—that may apply in different ways. The things that are near are always the things that are most likely to upset us, to limit us, to disconcert us. We become so occupied with the thing that is nearest. When we are right up against a situation and something is right up against us, we are in such danger of thinking that is all, that is everything, that we forget we have negotiated many such an obstacle before which we thought was going to be the end of everything for us. We learn our lessons so slowly. Here is another thing right at hand, right before our eyes; another mountain, another hedge, another real difficulty; and again we think, 'This is going to spoil everything, this is going to be the end of everything'. All we see is the thing near at hand.

So spiritually short-sighted people are only caught up with their own things, their own affairs, their own blessings, and their own spiritual gifts. The Corinthian church was such a church. We need to be careful and make sure that we don't have a short-sighted look about our life. The Corinthian church would not come out of that. Can you imagine how tragic it would be if all we were concerned about was ourselves—our profits, our gifts, our blessings, our church, our salvation and so on. They could not look beyond; they could not reach out to God's great calling that rested upon them. They were concerned about their own spiritual matters and missed out on all that God has for them. It is good to be concerned about ourselves to some degree, but we also need to see things in the greater light of God, beyond the local body, that is the church. We need

to see things in the light of God's eternal purpose which is often beyond the things we see around us, beyond our own limited vision.

As a body of people we have to be careful. Even the things that God has given us; the things we have been blessed with, the light we may have received, even these can be hindrances to our growth when they arrest us and keep our eyes away from the Lord. Things which God has shown us, given us and even blessed us with can limit our growth. That is why it is so serious that we strike the right balance. Be careful with the things that arrest us and the things that keep our eyes riveted towards our own little boundaries, even though it may be a God-given ministry, God-given responsibility or a God-given blessing. We must always look beyond the immediate realities to the eternal values of Christ. Certain things become practical as we keep our eyes upon the Lord over a period of time. We need to look beyond the present to the eternal. If we only and always look at the measure of our Christlikeness, then it could well be that our eyes are off the Lord. It is difficult to understand this. There is a promise and we must keep our eyes on the Lord. There are weaknesses, shortcomings and failures but we are not slaves to them and we must look to the greater purpose of Christ and to that which the Lord has called us. Our heart is fixed upon the Lord and that is the only way to look at ourselves. That will bring us progression and the other one will leave us in disarray.

We can even be short-sighted with the Word of God. Even if the word is brought to some short-sighted people, they cannot believe that it is God's word. They do not allow a breaking forth of truth in their inward man. Let us not limit God. There are many factors in our lives and we must see them in the eternal values of Christ. I would encourage us to look beyond our immediate situations.

(d) The Downward Look

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.
(Philippians 2:4)

The apostle Paul urged the believers in Philippi not to be governed by the way things affected them personally, not to measure every matter in the light of whether they stood to gain or lose by it. Many times we can be totally absorbed in things of our own interests. Every judgment flows out of that kind of an attitude. It is very dangerous. This is called looking downwards. What a terrible thing it can be. Self-forgetfulness is one of the secrets of spiritual progress. The apostle Paul tells us that forgetting those things which are behind and looking unto that which is forward would be spiritually beneficial. But some people cannot forget the past things. May the Lord help us. Many believers are affected by having a downward look.

In the mean while his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh

harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. (John 4:31-35)

The Lord demonstrated something to the disciples here. He tells them to turn away from personal cares and concerns. He was as hungry as them but He showed them that it is necessary to turn away from satisfying personal needs and to see the need in the heart of the Father and to meet His need. There are personal concerns (in which so much of our time is given, though the Lord has been so merciful to us in every way), and these occupy much of our time and this could also be called a downward look. A selfish look is a downward look. If we want to walk a level path we should keep our eyes away from ourselves. Many times we are too concerned about ourselves. This is the most common of the 'looks' we have considered and we need to be very careful.

We must not look to ourselves but to others. Sometimes we can be caught up with a self-look and we look for something good rather than the bad things. And we feel bad when we don't see the good. A man who looked like that is mentioned in the Bible. The apostle Paul says in Romans 7:18, "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not.*"

What is the difference between examining ourselves and looking unto ourselves? Looking into ourselves for something good will keep us in bondage and is a downward look, but we must examine ourselves; this is a work of the Holy Spirit in cooperation with each believer. We should let Him search us. When the Spirit searches us He will never condemn us. He will only convict us of sin and unrighteousness in the light of God's righteousness. Every work of the Holy Spirit is possible. Whenever there is a feeling of condemnation in your heart it is clear that you are looking into your own self to find something good. There is no good that dwells in you or me. That is why the Paul lifts his eyes and looks towards the Lord. Many times having good intentions we find ourselves in bondage and condemnation. We need to be careful therefore. We may look to spiritual things no doubt, but they do not become life in us, but open the door to spiritual death. A man who checks his own pulse is not really a healthy man. Let the Holy Spirit check us, not the pastor. Let the Holy Spirit check your spiritual pulse. Sometimes God's words are so clear but we go the other way. There comes about an imbalance, and therefore we must let the law of the spirit of life in the Lord Jesus Christ be the standard of our health. We need to be so careful. How will He do that work? It is His work and He will convict us and never condemn us. It is not the work of my flesh to do so, nor the work of the religious man in us. The selfish look is a downward look and it brings disaster to us.

We must keep our eyes on the Lord, gazing upon the Lord. Let Him check my pulse. He will show us the way and we will go that way. He is more than willing to do that if we would allow Him. We have to be open for His work in us. He will never fail us.

Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net. (Psalm 25:15)

What a testimony! The Psalmist's eyes were ever towards the Lord. The Psalmist says He will pluck my feet out of the net. If we want to keep our feet out of the net, that is, away from the fowler and from the snare of the evil one, then we must maintain our gaze upon the Lord. *Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith* is what the Hebrew writer says. Keep your eyes upon the Lord and your ways will be established. God is faithful.

(e) Finally, the Upward Look

Chapter 12 of Hebrews tells us about having an upward look in partnership with Christ who is the author and finisher of our faith.

It is clear, then, that much of our spiritual walk is dependent upon our looking, and the Apostle was right when, after writing this long letter, He brings into view the great object—partnership with Christ—and urges us to go on. He summed it all up in this fragment: *“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us looking off unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith”*. We are urged to stretch forward to His fullness. looking away from the things behind, looking away from those around, looking off from the self-matters altogether, looking beyond the things that are so near, obsessing us now; looking off from ourselves unto Jesus. We are to look to the Lord.

Abraham was tempted to look in other directions and to seek for more and immediate benefits in his life. Perhaps he was tempted to settle for something lesser than he was called, but as we read in Hebrews 11:8, he went not knowing whither he went. He went on looking to the One who had called him.

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. (Hebrews 11:8 -10)

So we see that Abraham's eyes were not on himself, or on things around, or on the immediate things, not backwards, but his eyes were upon the One who was the maker who had called him.

Proverbs 4:23-27 has a very enlightening word. Abraham's eyes were right on the Lord and his eyelids looked straight and his ways were established. He moved carefully. He cast his eyes upon the Lord. There were many choices to be made in his life but he always looked to the Lord. There is a great deal packed into that, but it just means this: get God's purpose clearly and fully in view, nothing less, nothing other, and adjust the whole of your life to it; adjust your life to the ultimate.

There were problems between Lot and Abraham. *Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. (Genesis 13:8)*. Abraham said to Lot that he would go left if he went right and *vice versa*. In verse 10 we see that Lot lifted up his eyes and saw the well-watered plains of Jordon. He was a

man who looked to his own gain. Abraham was Lot's uncle, an elderly person who would normally have chosen first, but he let Lot do so. Lot looked out for himself, but Abraham never did so. God looks for those who never look for themselves. God chooses those who never choose themselves. God looks for those who leave their choices to the One who will choose for them. This is where the flesh is unwilling to bend, but blessed are those who leave their choices to the Lord. The enemy always tells us to choose for ourselves, to use the faculties God has given us. It may seem difficult to say that God will choose and we do not have to do so. It may be difficult to live by these words, but what a blessing it is if we do.

Abraham looked for a city, not any city, but a city that God had made. Lot on the other hand looked for any kind of a city; he was a city man. That is the heart of man. Abraham left it to the Lord to choose.

Keep God's END in View

For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2 Corinthians 4:17-18)

It is the eternal that we must grasp in our sight. That would call for adjustments in our day to day life so that our lives can be directed by the Lord. There are many things involved in our lives and this calls for adjustments and giving in. There are procedures and steps involved and they must be carried out in the light and sight of the eternal things, in the light of God's end. All this is a matter of life and not doctrine.

The eternal must be kept in view, and life must be adjusted in every way to God's end. How busy the enemy is to circumvent the onward movement and the final attainment, by getting us entangled and compromised in this earth, somehow to slip in something that will be a check, an arrest, a hold-up. Oh, the spiritual tragedies that take place all around due to some foolish relationship, some entanglement, some consideration of convenience, some pandering to the satisfaction of the flesh, something slipped in by the enemy; and there it ends and we find we cannot go right on to God's end. Something is holding us back, some relationship keeps us tied up, and something comes in to change the direction of our walk in Christ.

Let us learn to adjust everything to God's end, to have all our affairs in life brought into line with God's end. When you are considering a relationship, have God's end in view. When you are considering the next step in your life, have God's end in view. When you are deciding where you are going to live and do your work, have God's end in view. When you are deciding what your business is going to be, have God's end in view. Everything must be brought into line—that is the meaning of this, *“Make level the path of thy feet”* or *“Weigh carefully the path of thy feet”*.

We have to say to ourselves, ‘Now then, this is an opportunity, a prospect, that seems to hold a lot of good; but first of all, what is this going to mean for the Lord, how does this relate to the full end of God?’ Nothing less than that must weigh with us. *“Let thine eyes look right on”*—not

just at this thing, not even at what it seems to promise, but *right on*. How does it relate to the end? In all things, look beyond; see what is the relation to the full end of God; and adjust accordingly. Get the vision, and adjust life as far as possible in relation to it.

Let thine eyes look right on. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.”

Proverbs 4:25-27

Some of you may find yourselves in spheres and conditions where perhaps you will have many a temptation to accept something less, where it seems impossible to have all that you would like to have, where it seems that God's full purpose cannot be realized. Therefore you will settle down to something less and other than God's best. You may meet all kinds of things to divert you from the course of the on-high calling. The word to you is: "*Let thine eyes look right on*". Remember our Lord was offered the kingdoms of this world and the glory thereof by the enemy, but He refused them and looked right on. Yes, He was offered an easy way out, a way out of the Cross; but no, He let His eyes look right on, He set His face as a flint. His eyes looked right on, and here it is recorded, as we read in the next part of the verse from Hebrews:

“Looking off unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God”. (Hebrews 12:2)

Jesus set His eyes on God's end. May we have grace to do the same.

For a Time Such as This

The Lord has been ministering His intentions for our lives. It is so important to be tuned to Him in our spirits and to be in a place where the Spirit has liberty to minister to us. Many say that they are open, but it is not so in reality. Many are not open for that which the Lord wants to minister to them. The Lord often withholds from His people, and we see this in the writing of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, “*I have given you only milk for you were not in a place to receive any more*”. They brought a limitation upon themselves. Although the people were open to receive the ‘milk’ but not the ‘meat’ of the word, the Lord was not able to minister to them because they had limited themselves. The Hebrew writer says,

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.
(Hebrews 5:11-14)

We need to see Christ as one beyond the Saviour of our lives, beyond one who heals, beyond one who blesses, beyond a Christ who can meet all our needs and answer all our prayers. The Hebrew writer wanted to minister a Christ beyond what the people had in mind and experience. But they were not in a place to receive that in their lives. Such a thing can happen with God’s people and we can limit God. In both places, corporately and individually, they had limited God where there is no ministration of His word in our lives. It would depend on how open we are and the desire to be in the revealed will of the Lord. The Lord is not very keen to give us this revelation if we are not keen to receive it. Even though there may be a ministration of the word in our midst, it will be like those who were with Paul when he traveled to Damascus. He could hear the Lord say, “Saul-Saul...”, and it was a specific word to him, but the others could not hear what the Lord had to say. That could happen right here. We can hear something mentally and naturally and not perceive what it is, but there could also be present those like Paul who received a specific word into their own beings. All would depend upon how we are toward God. So let us be open to receive His word without prejudice and bias, letting it work in each one of us. Though we may be familiar with these words, I know that when the Holy Spirit begins to bring it before us and broods over us, it is always new and different.

And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children. (1 Samuel 1:2)

There were certain conditions prevailing upon God’s people at that time. The priesthood at that time was far away from God’s purposes and the Lord was unhappy with the situation in the midst of God’s people. In other words, the state of things today is much the same as existed at that time.

Outstanding Features of the Time

A Formality in Things of God

There are three outstanding features that really marked the conditions of God's people. Firstly, there was a formality in the things of God being pursued in the energy of the flesh and not the energy of the Spirit. We can read this in Chapter 2. Things were offered to God but there was no heart in it. This resulted in mixture and brought in spiritual adultery, weakness and ineffectiveness in the lives of the people. The sin of the priesthood is very evident in Chapter 2, but apart from that there was so much that was merely formal and ceremonial.

Today also many things are done in the strength of the soul and there are not many who can discern and know that it is not the spirit but it is the strength of the soul. That is the sad state of God's people. The energy of the soul, the flesh, is dominating everything and so we see that today the majority of Christendom is lying in so much mixture. Please do not close your hearts to this word. It is so similar today. There were moments of worship, there were movements made, but in the energy of the flesh and not the energy of the Spirit. We may be hearing so many deeper things of the Lord, but in the final analysis it is not a matter of doctrine but of life. *Overcomer* is not a doctrine, it is one who overcomes and it speaks of life. It is a matter of heart and a work of God in our inner man. God's true remnant needs to remain in a place of brokenness and sensitivity in this hour for the work of the Spirit.

An Absence of Spiritual Revelation

The second feature is that there was an absence of a spiritual revelation and spiritual perception.

And the child Samuel ministered unto the LORD before Eli. And the word of the LORD was precious in those days; there was no open vision. (1 Samuel 3:1)

There was no open vision in those days, no revelation, no spiritual perception, no understanding of the Spirit. The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation was absent and inoperative in the midst of the priests and God's people. There was no spiritual intelligence in their lives, no spiritual apprehension of Christ and His purposes. It is so true in the midst of God's people though there is so much ministration of God's word. Perhaps there is a greater ministration of the Word today than ever before in all twenty centuries. Even so if we meet spiritual leaders, and there are thousands in the churches, they all accept that we lack the quality that many others had in other centuries. The significance of our times is that we have so much **quantity** and so little **quality**. People can talk of growth and maturity, and there is much of all that, but the majority of leaders realize that we lack the quality of life that men and other saints had. This is the truth. There is so much of increase everywhere as never before in history, but God's people lack true revelation and perception.

The Intrusion of the Uncircumcised Flesh

The third feature is the constant menace of the Philistines who came against the people of God. This eventually resulted in the departure of the glory of God from the midst of Israel. The Philistines represent the intrusion of the natural man or the flesh.

In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. (Colossians 2:11)

Philistines speak of the uncircumcised flesh, the natural man. When David saw Goliath he said, “*Who is this uncircumcised Philistine?*” The Philistines intruded into the lives of the Israelites repeatedly and eventually it resulted in the glory of the Lord departing from Israel. What would that mean to us today? The intrusion of the flesh, that life that does not want to be crucified in to our spiritual life (the natural mind is hostile to God; the carnal mind is enmity with God). It is the cause of our spiritual lowness. It is only through the cross can there be a cleansing and renewing of that mind. The intrusion of the natural man into our spiritual life is very dangerous and that is what is dominating many spiritual people. That is why the Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians that they were not spiritual but carnal.

In 1 Corinthians 2 the Apostle Paul mentions three types of men—the *natural* man, the *spiritual* man, and the *carnal* man. The natural man is the one who is not born again and the carnal man is the one who is born again but given to the natural impulses and instincts and the self-nature. The spiritual man is one who is led of the Spirit of God. We need to really be careful in our lives that there is no intrusion of the natural man into the things of the Spirit and that which the Spirit is doing in our lives.

The Reactions of the Lord

When man defects, God reacts. That is what we see right through the history of mankind. The Lord is not satisfied to have it the way it was. Yet He does not abandon them altogether. He is a sovereign God but He does not abandon them, but He moves in a secret way to recover, restore and secure an instrument of recovery and restoration for His people. This stands out visibly in 1 Samuel.

The second thing is that there has to be a distinct and peculiar travail amongst God’s people in bringing forth that instrument. Samuel represents such an instrument and Hannah represents the travail that precedes it and brings forth the instrument. We need to understand the times and the way or method that God reacted to the situation. That is where our attention needs to go. God begins to work in a secret way.

God wants to have an instrument of recovery so that He has a vessel to restore His people and be a testimony unto the Lord. There are three outstanding features concerning the condition of God’s people. God reacts to the moral condition of His people so as to begin a work of restoration. God is sovereign and He has His own ways.

It is very clear from Chapter 1 of 1 Samuel that this instrument of God could never come about in the normal course of events.

1 Samuel 1:5-6 But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah: but the LORD had shut up her womb. And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the LORD had shut up her womb.

We see here the emphasis upon what the Lord did. The Lord shut up her womb. This shows clearly that the instrument of God does not come about in the usual way. They cannot come in the natural way. The usual way will not do. How often we want the usual way and that is where our struggles are. The usual ways could not bring forth a Samuel. It is the deliberate act of God that will bring forth the special instrument. This is a settled matter in the heavens and we cannot change God's principles. Neither such an instrument nor a company of God's people can be brought forth in the normal way. This is an eternal counsel of God. May the Lord help us to apprehend this so that we may know truly in our inward man what we have been called to be. Hannah's state was the doing of the Lord.

In this realm, the usual will not do, but in other realms of less important purposes or more general purposes, the usual methods may work. There are many things that are permitted in the general realm but not in this realm, God is most concerned that the natural course and the usual way will not produce it. Let us be apprehended afresh. The world has yet to see this company of people and it will not come about in the usual way. It has to be a deliberate act of God against the usual way.

Samuel was not an afterthought of God. He was foreknown and foreordained of God and yet humanly he was an impossibility. Let us accept this and perceive it by the Spirit for it is difficult to understand. Why did the Lord act in this way and in this matter? On the one side, Samuel was in the foreknowledge of God. So why should the Lord shut the womb of Hannah? This is difficult to understand and reconcile. Could not the Lord allow Hannah to bring forth in the normal course of things? The human mind argues with the Lord and finds this difficult to reconcile. If the Lord wants this, then why can't He just do it? This is where we need to have a spiritual apprehension of God's ways. Such an instrument or such a people must be brought forth in God's way.

The bringing forth of this vessel has to be by a fellowship in the divine travail. In relation to the instrument there is always travail. The Lord wants His people to enter in to this travail. The apostle Paul says, "*That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.*" (Philippians 3:10). There is a travail if we are to be a part of this company. It is to this travail and fellowship that many will not enter. Hannah went through unusual and uncommon situations that brought agony to her soul. Verse 6 says that her adversary also provoked her sore. Verse 10 says that she was in bitterness of soul and prayed unto the Lord and wept sore. She went through much travail and bitterness of soul not just for her personal matter and selfish needs, but as we read through, there was something more there. Finally when Samuel came forth she placed him before the Lord immediately.

Though it is true that she desired a male child, it was to meet then need of God. As soon as possible she gave Samuel to the house of God. She had weaned him (v-24) which means she brought things to a hasty end and placed him in the hands of the Lord. She did not take the natural course of time to wean, but ended it as soon as possible to place him in the hands of the Lord and meet His need. Samuel was so close to her, so dear to her, for she had paid a great price to bring him in, yet keeping her commitment to God. What we see is that there is a travail that Hannah came into. This is what the true remnant of God will come into in this hour.

If a thing is to serve God in a special way or a vital way, it is never brought about easily without unusual travail, suffering, and bitterness of soul. Here we see that if we want to be a part of the company that will bring forth a Samuel, or this measure of life and purpose, there is much bitterness of soul and fears that we will have to go through. There is no easy way if this is what you think your calling is. Today preachers talk about prosperity and blessing. They would say that if you are suffering, you need to know that you are not in Christ! There are many false balances today and they are an abomination before the Lord.

Though we come to Christ because of our suffering, we know that He said to all those who are heavy burdened, *come and I will give you rest*. But He also said, *take up my yoke*, and most preachers never mention that! There is a fellowship of suffering in the yoke, though most talk of fellowship without the yoke of His sufferings. Our fellowship is in the yoke, and every true child of God is in the yoke of the Lord. Many do not want this suffering and bitterness of soul. Believe that this is your calling—many tears, much bitterness of soul.

For a time it appeared that nothing was happening despite Hannah's sorrows, heartache, and travail. She remained in a place of barrenness and weeping of the soul. The adversary provoked her repeatedly, saying that all her confessions of faith were useless; her repeated visits to the house of God were of no avail; her holding on to God; her great brokenness was still keeping her in a place of brokenness. Yet there was no philosophical acceptance of those things in her mind in any way. There was no fatalistic capitalization in her heart; no compromising at any point. She continued in the travail of her soul; her lamentation and her travail. She knew that the Lord is a factor and that there is a hope she could have in the Lord, hoping against hope, looking towards a God who could raise the dead, who called the things that were as though they were not. She was able to trust God. She kept her focus upon the Lord saying the Lord is a great factor.

One of the painful things that Hannah had to go through was the prompting and needling of Peninnah (v-6). She was provoked by her adversary. Who is Peninnah? She was of the same household. She was a co-wife with Hannah. She was not a stranger or foreigner, and yet she provoked her solely to make her fret. May the Spirit minister something to us. Peninnah had many children but none were divinely appointed, none were ever humanly an 'impossibility'. Let the Spirit open this to your being. For her to bring forth many children was easy being the natural course, the usual way. It was simple, normal and usual. But it was different for Hannah. The Lord had in her a peculiar vessel for a peculiar purpose that cuts off the many activities, the works, every occupation that is going on in the same household of faith where everything is

happening in the natural course. Peninnah was of the same household, bringing forth naturally, doing normal works, engaged in normal occupations, all done in some relationship to the Lord Himself, but in the energies of the self in man, in the strength of the nature and the facility of man without restraints. May the Lord open our eyes to see the difference?

On the one hand we see something that the hand of the Lord had brought forth. And on the other side, where the usual outworkings are not seen, the usual results are not seen, those evidences which we normally see are not evident, those proofs are not there. Then there is criticism. That is what we see and we need to know that this criticism will be there. While Peninnah is flourishing and the Lord is giving her many children, what is happening with you, Hannah? There is a criticism. Results are not there, evidences are not there, proofs are not there, there is a pointing of the finger and there are grievous imputations. This is true and we have to go through it as a church if we believe this is our calling.

The many acts of divine sovereignty will be given a twist to mean just the opposite of God's thoughts. For example, it was God's sovereign hand that closed Hannah's womb. That sovereign act of God was given a twist to mean the opposite of God's thought implying that God is against her. This is so true. This ministry has gone through such taunting for many years. As a church you will know it, if you are standing in line with this ministry and this vision. This is what we will go through. The very acts of divine sovereignty will be given a twist to mean that God is not with us as things come against this calling. Let us be encouraged in our midst. If you really know what you have been called to, the usual, the normal, and the natural will not work in your life, and the sooner you reconcile to it the better it will be.

One system of things taunts the other. So be it. It ever was and it ever will be. There is nothing one can do about it. That is what we must realize. He is the greatest reality. But when the time of the Lord did come, Samuel came forth. The undeniable fact was that the barren did bring forth. One Samuel meant more to God than all the children of Peninnah put together. This really blessed my heart. It is not a matter of comparative value. It was the need of the peculiar time. Sufferings were in connection with his coming into life. All her sufferings were in the direction of a bringing forth, and all the sufferings go beyond the pride of life. All the bitterness of her soul, the pouring out of her heart in bitterness and tears show that she was much beyond pride in her life. She was not in a place of comparison nor competition. Not at all. Her tears, her sorrow and her agony in her soul go beyond the comparison of pride, self-satisfaction and vindication. The time of her waiting had been tested and refined in the fire. And finally Samuel came forth. When we look at Samuel's life later on, we see that all the suffering and the sorrow was made worthwhile. The wisdom of God's mysteriousness was seen later in Samuel's life. God was justified in Samuel. The channel that God used to bring forth Samuel was satisfied.

This walk is a costly walk. The usual ways will not work with this company. When the Lord wants something for an hour of peculiar need such as this, the methods that God uses cannot be the ordinary ones. God's remnant must understand this. God will make it very clear to His remnant that others can, but you cannot. That is the word of the Lord for His remnant. More and

more deeply we are entering into such an hour. The general thing is not going to meet the situation and the Lord must bring through for a time such as this. The Lord must bring through a vessel for His kingdom for a time such as this, a vessel who will pay the price.

Is there anyone who can hear the travail of the Spirit and feel the need of God in this hour—a people who will be willing to pay the price, who will be willing to face every taunting, every provocation, every criticism, every pointing of the finger, every grievous imputation. Can God find those who are willing to come into the bitterness of their soul, who will weep sore before the Lord, not for themselves, but for the Lord to obtain that vessel. The Lord has His Hannahs, but there are also the Peninnahs today in the same household where Peninnah is ever increasing. However, God has His Hannahs who are willing to go through the fellowship of His suffering. It is for you to respond to God for your own life. May God help you therefore.

Gathering All Things in Christ

*Ephesians 1:1-12 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; **Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:** In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*

In these verses we see the wonderful fullness that God has for His people. His divine intention from eternity is to bring a people into fullness. This whole letter is a letter of fullness in a sense. Every clause, every line carries great depth. Even a small fragment of one of these verses would bring a fullness into play. The fullness that God wants to offer to His people is clearly seen in this chapter. It is always encouraging to get hold of things like this which really contain all that God has for His people.

He will gather together in one all things in Christ. Some translations say that the Lord will sum up everything in Christ. The Amplified says in verses 9 and 10,

Making known to us the mystery (secret) of His will (of His plan, of His purpose). [And it is this:] In accordance with His good pleasure (His merciful intention) which He had previously purposed and set forth in Him,

[He planned] for the maturity of the times and the climax of the ages to unify all things and head them up and consummate them in Christ, [both] things in heaven and things on the earth.

To sum up or unify all things in Christ is the goal, and this is what God has purposed in eternity. To gather together all things means to unify all things in Christ. Let the Holy Spirit minister the depths of these verses to us, keeping us away from theology and the exposition of all things, that He may enlighten us.

When sin entered this world through Adam, a great process of disintegration commenced in the world. First it began in the man himself. Let the Holy Spirit minister this truth to us for it is very

important. The process of disintegration first took place in man himself. Man was no longer a single entity, but became a divided personality. Every son of Adam is a divided personality until now. There is in a way a civil war going on in his nature, his very constitution. He is a divided being in conflict with himself. This is a reality that all of us must accept. Is that not true in all of us? We know enough about ourselves. There is nothing in our nature, make-up or constitution that speaks of harmony. We find that there is a war in man himself because of sin. There is a war within us, in our make-up and in our constitution. As human beings we are broken, divided, fragmented and disintegrated. It happened first *in* him and not *outside* of him. We need to realize this with the help of the Holy Spirit. And then it happened with the first couple, with the only two on the earth. First it happened within man himself and then it happened between the first two people, the only two, the man and his wife. We can discern the element of disintegration in them as man and wife from the very beginning. The disruption that came between them resulted in man blaming the woman. This was the beginning of schism in the family and the beginning of domestic disharmony.

In the beginning, the first family had a great unity, for the word says, *“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”* (Genesis 2:24). Then something came in and they were no more like that. Finally when they were driven out of the Garden, they were blaming one another for their faults. As they walked out of the Garden in shame, they blamed one another for all that had happened. We are familiar with such kind of disharmony in our lives. It is so easy for us to put it on others, but we can see where it all began. Man was no longer a single entity. There was a battle taking place in his very nature and constitution. Not only that, but soon division and strain entered into the first two lives on the earth.

Further we read that Cain and Able were the children of the first family. They too were involved in division, disintegration and schism that went on to result in the first domestic murder. And from that family this disunity has spread to the whole race. It was scattered all over the earth, with diversity of language, caste and creed. That is seen all around us today. But, here in the letter of Ephesians we read of a tremendous expression of unification in Christ brought about by the Father. Looking at the existing conditions today this seems an impossibility, but this is God’s economy and He has settled in eternity that in the fullness of time He will accomplish it.

The Old Testament books show such a division between Jew and Gentile - very powerful, totally irreconcilable, hating one another bitterly. The Jews had nothing to do with the Gentiles and counted them as unclean. The Gentiles reacted in a different way. The present state of the human race is one of brokenness, scattering, discord, conflict, hatred, quarrels, strife, and even war. This is clearly seen all around. In other words from center to circumference everything is in pieces and there is no trace of unity. But God has not given up.

God has a secret and He knew what would happen, what would come up, and He devised His own way of meeting the division. Before the fire breaks out, He has prepared a way out for His people. Nothing surprises Him. He had a secret in his own heart of how He would resolve this

problem of the human race. This secret upon the heart of God is what Paul calls *the mystery*. How would God do it? How would He change the whole situation? This is the mystery. He would gather together all things in Christ. In Ephesians we read of the mystery repeatedly. In other words, God would make His eternal Son the integrating center, the integrating sphere of a *new creation*. He would be the focus of a new creation in which all the conflicts would never again be found. That God would make His Son the integrating center of a new creation in which all the diversities would never again be found. This is the sum of the letter to the Ephesians—to *gather all things in Christ*. And it is in this connection that the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world; it is in this connection that the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world; it is in this connection that Calvary and the Cross came into being. May God help us to understand this great mystery. The death of Christ was not just a matter of the forgiveness of sins. We have brought down the power of the cross, the sacrifice of Christ, and all things in Christ to human level. It is all to unify things in Christ—all things in heaven and in the earth.

Let us now move on to something more specific.

Ephesians 2:14-16 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.

In these Scriptures we read that through the cross the enmity is removed. We have been hearing many things about the Cross and have many conceptions and teachings on the cross. But we find that in verse 16 above, in the cross, the enmity was taken over and destroyed. It is done. That disintegration that began was destroyed in and through the cross. It was laid hold of and destroyed on the cross. So where there is a true work of the cross in any one of us, all these divisions based upon various matters will cease to exist in our lives. Remember that the cross came into existence in this connection of brokenness, division, and disintegration. It came to answer that condition and to counter it. The cross therefore is the instrument for dealing with all that—that enmity in the flesh. As we have seen in Ephesians 2:16, the enmity was destroyed as far as God is concerned. That is what the cross will do in us. The effectiveness of the cross will be seen in some lives. If the cross really gets down into the depths of our beings, the whole situation will begin to change in ourselves and in our relationships with others. Things will begin to change. This is something we need to realize. This is the great wisdom of God who has made His Son to be the integrating center of the world. This is so true.

When you became a believer, your life which was broken began to be integrated. We have experienced that in our lives. Some of our lives were really terrible, in pieces, and then we came to a place of believing Christ and He began to bring our lives together. In a greater measure we can see that He is the center and the circumference of this integration that God wants to do in the universe. Where the cross continues to work, the enmity is laid hold of and destroyed. If the

cross is working in us, the effect will be the same. The enmity within will be laid hold of and be brought to an end. The cross does this tremendous work in man and this is the wisdom of God.

We do not meet each other on the natural ground, but on the ground of Christ. This is a spiritual ground where He Himself is the focal point, the center and the sphere of God's purpose. We meet *in Christ*. Our coming together is in Christ who is the focal point of integration. We are gathering together in Christ.

In Ephesians, the expression '*in Christ*' is repeated many, many times. This is divine wisdom. Everything is in Christ. He is the center and the focal point of integration that the Father wants to bring about here.

We have been baptized by one Spirit into one body. This is the mystery that has been revealed. The apostle goes on to Chapter 3 and by revelation says:

...How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words)... Ephesians 3:3.

He goes on to say that the church is the vessel of this mystery. That is what we see in Ephesians. Christ is the center of this integration, and the church is the vessel. God's secret is not only that the Son will be the focal point but we see that God's secret is also the church which shall be the vessel of this integration. The church is said to be a great mystery, and the Son is also a great mystery. The Church is the vessel in which the unity should be displayed. The unifying work of the Spirit is to be displayed by the church. What a tragedy it is to see the church as it is today.

The Church is a mystery or a secret to reveal the mystery of God and the unity that the Father would like to have in the earth. But over the years, look what the church has become. Despite all that we see around us, yet where we find the true church, the true expression of the body of Christ, you find an integration in the Son. You find Christ to be the integrating center. Where two or three are gathered together in the essence and the substance of that name, there you will find true integration in the Son. There is an integration in Christ wherever you find that true body. And those disintegrating things are outside. The mighty integration of divine things works in them through the cross.

We are familiar with many terms and expressions. In verse Ephesians 1:10 the apostle Paul says that there is a dispensation of the fullness of times and we can have this hope that at that time the Lord might bring about the integration of all things in Christ. It is precious to realize that there is something called *the fullness of times* and we have not reached that yet, but we are getting near that. It is an important time and that is why God is speaking these things to us. When God will gather all things together, it may not be physically, but it will be one glorious gathering of all things in Christ. One glorious unity in the Spirit will happen in the fullness of His time. He will gather all things in Christ, not physically but spiritually. God has determined to do it and it will be wonderful when that is truly realized. God will fulfill that because it is His word to His people as we read in the Book of Revelation. It is here that the Spirit wants to minister to us as a church.

Where there is a true expression of the body, we see the integration of people gathered together in Christ.

The burden of the Spirit is to further establish in us the same thought, bringing us to the place where we are given to the present workings of the Spirit so that we are brought into greater measure of the Son. We need to take heed to what the Spirit is emphasizing in our midst.

Ephesians 1:16 says, *that the Spirit might reconcile into one body by the Cross, thereby killing the mutual enemy and bringing the feud to an end.* (Amplified version)

On the cross the enmity was taken hold of and destroyed, and the Father would like to do the same in our midst if there is any enmity in our flesh. Disintegration and divisions are in the nature and constitution of man from the beginning. Integration in man and others would be brought about only through the cross. Within us and with one another through the cross there will be an integration. If there is any enmity, then there is a denial of the cross which is none other than a denial of Christ, and it will result in the denial of the church. When there is an enmity, the church cannot come forth. So we see Christ becomes the center and the focal point of integration, and the Cross becomes the tremendous vessel of integration to bring about integration in the midst of God's people. This is very solemn and it is a solemn council of God.

Often we think of Peter who denied the Lord, but we do not realize that every time we deny the working of the cross in our lives, we are denying Christ. And every time we deny Christ, the true expression of the body of Christ is also denied. This is indeed a solemn counsel. We have to see whether we are denying Christ in our lives and hindering that kind of unifying in Christ. Only if we allow the cross to work can there be a unity and a joining together in Christ unto God.

As far as God is concerned this enmity of the flesh was laid hold of and destroyed. Where is the cross? Where is Christ? Where is the Church? Where is the Body? It may take time for us to answer these questions but these are important things that the Lord has placed before us. If there is still present in us that which the cross was supposed to have done away with in our lives, then we need to turn to God. Let us not be reluctant to open our lives to the working of the Holy Spirit. He is doing a work and we must open our lives to Him.

Chapter 3:14 of Ephesians was something that ministered to me and opened my eyes though I have read it several times:

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

"For this reason [seeing the greatness of this plan by which you are built together in Christ], I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Amplified)

What a man he was! He saw the greatness of the Father's plan to build us together in Christ. This is what he bowed his knees to. Then he says of whom the whole family in heaven and the earth is named. He first talks about the Father and then of the family.

Ephesians 3:14-19 *For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you,*

according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

If any man wants to know the heights and depths of God, one has to be rooted and grounded in love for one another. This talks of a people who will come into such an integration that they will be able to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ. There is a love in such dimension that will help the Body to come into that great dimension of God's purpose. Only such can come to that end. It will only be done when there is such a mighty love in the hearts of God's people. That talks about an effective working of the cross in the lives of God's people.

Without this work of the cross in us, we cannot come into that kind of love and unity in Christ. We have to be strong to give ourselves to apprehend the depths of Christ with all the saints. If so, we have to let the cross work in our lives. It is only through those who are given to this that God will meet His end.

This work of re-integration that God is doing in His Son will be done if we allow Him to have His way and His will in our lives, and that we would allow the cross to be effective in our lives. The cross will find all things that are opposed or contrary to integration in our lives. They will be brought to the surface and be dealt with. This is where the whole battle arises in our lives. How many will be willing to give themselves to the working of the cross. Let us be open to this as we need the cross to work in our individual lives because there is a war in our nature and in our constitution and that is where the cross must be allowed to work in our midst, in us and also in our midst. And when the cross finds out the places where it needs to work, then integration will be the spontaneous result of it.

The way of unity as far as the Holy Spirit is concerned is not the way of patching things from the outside. That will never work and God never does that. God's unity or integration does not come that way. It is always by the working of the cross, not by dialogues or by discussions, but by the opening our hearts to God. When our lives are open and the cross is working, then integration will follow. May God help us to allow the cross to work in our constitution, nature and our lives in these days. Why is there spiritual poverty or spiritual scarcity in us? It is there because of the same reason—the working of cross is so little in our lives. Where the cross works in us, the spiritual measures will increase spontaneously. That is how it happens always. When you get things that are contrary to Christ out of the way then the supply of the Christ increases, the measures of Christ increase. That is God's wisdom. Many times the cause of our poverty is this and not lack of prayer or lack of reading the Bible and we do not realize that the main reason is that the cross was not active in our lives. May the Lord watch over all of us!

Allow the Spirit to do this work in our lives and let us not loose what we have received. Let us rise up to the prompting of the Spirit. Let there be no denial of Christ in our lives.

God will gather all things and integrate all things in His Son for He is the focal point of integration. He will gather all things through His Son and the Church. Whether it is the cross or the blood or the sacrifice in the Son, everything was to bring about this integration in the earth. All that has gone into this integration will be gathered in His Son.

The Cry of the Remnant

Luke 18:1-8 And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

We may have read these verses many times and even heard many messages from them. The common interpretation of these verses is about a common widow who came to a judge to press her needs. These verses are generally used to encourage God's people to have importunate (that is pressing) prayer. Though this is so, yet we should not limit these verses to such an interpretation. There is something more if we see the setting of this parable which has a much larger connection. It is set in the coming of the Lord as is evident from verse 8.

The parable is set right into the coming of the Lord and the setting is in the end times and the wrapping up the things of God. It must be interpreted in the light of the setting and not be taken merely as a lesson for importunity in prayer. The avengement of the church can only take place when the Lord appears unto His people. The church will not be avenged until He comes. The church will be avenged against those who have been against it at the coming of the Lord. He will avenge His church.

Psalms 79 and 80 and Isaiah 64 show that when the remnant turn to God and cry out to the Lord, He will shine upon them. When God's people turn, the answer will come from the Lord. There is an adversary, and we read of that in this parable as well, for the woman said, 'avenge me of mine adversary'. We all know that there is an adversary—an adversary of the elect (verse 7) who cry day and night unto Him. The adversary is set against the elect, the remnant, the overcoming church. 'Shall not God avenge His own elect'—the elect is His own. The adversary is seen to be engaged in forcing persistent and growing pressure against the church. This is bringing the elect or remnant more and more to a place of crying to be avenged of this adversary. We see two things therefore: firstly, there is a growing pressure that the adversary brings upon the remnant and secondly, there is a deepening cry and travail of the people of God to reach out to Him in the Spirit.

The pressure is intensifying if we are really pressing on and pressing in to God's ultimate. I would not like to spend more time on this aspect, but surely if we are those who are moving on in the will and purpose of the Lord, we shall experience an increasing pressure from the adversary. This pressure is intensifying in the lives of such people. It is another sign of the end times. There may be other signs (even the tsunami) but we need to know what God is intending

for His church. The pressure upon His people is a sign of the end times and of the things that God will do when He comes again. The pressure will increase in the last days. This shows that His coming is close. As His remnant we need to know that this pressure will intensify in the last days.

Terrible things are happening in the midst of God's people. People are backsliding, falling away, and there is a tremendous spiritual decline and deterioration. Spiritual, family, and work pressures are increasing and there is a feeling that the vice is closing in and the pressure is becoming unbearable. You know it in your hearts—we see it and feel it in many ways. The adversary is not at rest. He is at war and knows what he is to do. If we are sensitive in this hour of pressure and living in God's will, pursuing after Him, then you would know. We see this pressure is coming from all directions. The adversary seems to be closing in on the church and as a result, the times are getting worse day by day. He is not even going to spare the elect. In Matthew we read that the enemy will try to deceive the very elect if possible. The enemy is closing in on the living elect. We should not be ignorant of his devices, as the apostle Paul warns. But the Corinthians did not heed his warnings.

May God help us to be in a place of alertness and staying awake. It is for each one of us to be alert and sober in our lives. The Lord has been faithful to warn His faithful, but often we are not faithful. I cannot walk for you and neither can you walk for me. We need to be serious in our own lives. It is not a matter of something outward, but we have to be inwardly alert in these days. The adversary is not going to be quiet and if we are careless we will be easily devoured. There is a caution that must come upon us. We must be awakened to this call in our lives. This work of the evil one is evident in the national, political, spiritual and moral sphere. It is becoming increasingly great. The whole world is lying in a lie; people are deceiving and being deceived. This is why the Lord asks that when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith? That talks about a remnant that will stick to the Lord and weep before the throne of God.

The history of God's people shows that whenever God moved, whenever God's people sought the Lord, when they set themselves to inquire of the Lord, then it is that the enemy comes. We see this truth in the word of God. The enemy comes to scatter, to arrest the work and to break up and to hinder. God is sovereign and His sovereignty takes hold of the moves of the enemy and later he turns them to His own favour and end. We need to reckon one thing here. The enemy marks such people. The reality is that the enemy marks such ones and he comes against them strongly bringing adversities upon His people. This reality cannot be ignored. The enemy's works and pressures will intensify as the Lord's people move on. The enemy marks those two or three who are crucial to God's purpose. The enemy comes to scatter them and scuttle them. That is true even today in our lives. So the matter of progression in His purpose is fraught with much opposition. We can never touch upon that without experiencing vehement opposition. It is always encompassed by elements of opposition. This spiritual progression is encompassed with opposing elements and forces. Whenever God moves even today there is always a counterfeit. Some antagonistic elements come against it. You can see this right through the word of God.

The children of Israel in the Book of Joshua were moving in to the Promised Land little by little, when a man named Achan under the influence of the evil one arrested and delayed the work of God. It is a reality and we need to know it. When Jesus was born, Herod was troubled and rose up against the child Jesus. The enemy came to oppose and scatter. The Jews opposed and were prejudiced.

Let me say quite clearly that prejudice is always set against spiritual progress. Prejudice never gives God a chance to work. This is very important. Many miss God's work not because they have backslidden or are caught up in some sin, but because there is prejudice in their hearts and God cannot work. I say this with the love of God. Prejudice closes the door and this can happen with any one of us. When it is there deep within, then God is not able to progressively take us on to our destiny. That is what hindered Israel and robbed them of God's purposes. The same thing is happening to the Israel of this day. We need to be extremely careful in our lives. I do not want to stand as a judge upon anyone's life but let us be open to the Holy Spirit. I have been very careful to restrain myself and not give any examples that may point to some specific people here. Many times we do not understand why there is no spiritual progress in our lives. We often wonder that though we are doing everything religious and spiritual, yet our lives are not moving forward. The reason is that prejudice stems our progress. Let us position and prepare ourselves so that God is able to change us and heal the heart of prejudice. We have come to a salvation nearer than when we first believed, but let us know that any kind of prejudice hinders our lives. It looks very innocent and harmless, but it can rob us of our destiny in Christ.

In the New Testament, when the church was struggling to establish itself and move on, we find the enemy trying to find an entrance into the very place where there was a lacking of the lordship of the Holy Spirit. The enemy tried to hinder every step taken towards enlargement. The enemy found an entrance in the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira. The spiritual enlargement in the early church was opposed by the enemy tooth and nail. To counter that work of God and check the progression to arrest the move of God and frustrate the saints, to paralyze the functioning of the Holy Spirit, the enemy moved in through two of God's people. In the Book of Acts, the apostle Paul points to some of the things that contributed to the hindering of God's purposes. He tells of the ways in which the enemy brought about things in the lives of God's people. It was through the flesh of insensitive brothers and sister that Satan tried to counter the work of the Spirit. Right in the midst of God's people, the enemy tried to counter the movement of God for His people.

In the case of Corinth it was the carnality of the brethren that the enemy used as a means to get at the work of the Lord. The people were carnal, that is, born again but not given to the Holy Spirit; they were driven by their natural senses. The soul-man was dominating their lives and through that the enemy came in and hindered the people of God. There was division and strife there, and they were not of one mind, and finally the enemy scattered and disintegrated them.

In Galatia it was the Judaizers that came in and Paul says, "*You did run well but who hindered you?*" Men with religious minds gave a chance for the enemy to work in their midst. People with antagonistic attitudes gave way to the enemy. The enemy arrested their progression. Paul says,

“How soon you were removed from the One who called you into salvation?” The hindrances had already come, the obstacles had already come. The counter move had already taken place. Then comes the great stroke of the enemy against the church.

Without malice and with real love I want to share that we all need to hear God and move on in His purpose. Despite the weaknesses we have we all have one call upon our lives. How many of us will make it to the end will depend on how we yield and how we respond to the Spirit.

God’s word shows that the master stroke of the enemy was when he began to work in the hearts of the people against the very one who had brought them into this salvation. In Corinth they rose up against the one who had given himself to such an extent to bring them into this light and salvation. The one vessel, the very instrument of God in their midst to bring them into salvation was the object of their opposition. They came against him relentlessly. That was the enemy’s master-stroke. Those who professed to be interested in the things of God stood up against him. How terrible it is. The same is applicable today, but God’s people are unaware of the moves of the enemy. This has been through the centuries. People have risen against the very vessel that the Lord had used to work and dispense His things. The word shows that Satan is set against that increase and enlargement and so he comes against the very instrument through God’s own people to further frustrate God’s purpose. This happened in the days of Moses. The enemy will misrepresent that vessel and lie about that man and use every means to discount that vessel in whatever way possible. The enemy’s aim is to arrest the divine purpose. Let us not be ignorant of his devices. The enemy wants to bring that vessel under assault. The enemy will stop at nothing. He will go on until the vessel is paralyzed, until that vessel cannot fulfill His purpose. We see this clearly in the life of Paul. The life of this man Paul stands out to show this to us. We see how the enemy maliciously and vehemently tried to assault his very life. And the life of the apostle stands before us to see this clearly. May God help us as this can happen to any one of us. The enemy is out there to make every attempt to stop you from finishing the course, to maliciously and vehemently arrest, hinder and in some way put you out. Take this life personally and seriously. God is speaking His mind to us.

If you are the in the thought of God and His purposes, you are going to meet with the attempts of the enemy in full measure. If you want to go all the way, the enemy will also go all the way. He will attempt to frustrate your onward move in every conceivable way, to frustrate you, and you may even meet him physically. You will meet the opposition in the soul realm. You will meet it in your spiritual man, and inside and outside yourself. In other words, this adversary is a reality and we should be sensitive to and our eyes should be open to. We face many situations, circumstances, voices of men and what they say, and so we must be very careful and sensitive of the malicious ways of the enemy. Sometimes we think we are sensitive, but we are not spiritually sensitive enough. We need to be aware of the malicious lies of the enemy who is shrewdly infusing his lies in every field. God help us! Our eyes should be wide open, attentive and alert in our spiritual man. If we are, then we will find explanation of things in our lives. We do not find

explanations to things because we are not sensitive. Speaking of Jesus, the prophet Isaiah says that He will not judge by the hearing of His ears nor the seeing of His eyes.

We should see beyond the ordinary, natural and the common. We should be able to see how the adversary is coming against God's people, the very elect, in these days. Circumstances would then turn out to be things that can be explained to us. You would find explanations through our situations. And it would cause you to stand up on your feet. You will no more be a man who is passive, but you will be active and alert and you will stand up on your feet. Many times the danger is that we are passive in situations. The enemy's uprising is not seen, and may go undetected in situations. And then we come into places of great loss. We see things with our ordinary eyes, but my prayer is that the Lord would open our eyes to see beyond the normal, the common, and that which meets the eye.

Saints, truly the pressure is increasing. What do you think the Lord will do while the enemy is moving subtly to thwart and arrest and bring to nothing all that God wants to do. The Lord is looking for something in His people. He is looking for the depths in His people. He is looking for a deepening cry, that travail from the soul, "*Avenge me Lord of my adversary!*" For *that* we need to have an eye able to see beyond the natural, beyond the common situations; then there will be a cry from the overcoming church, the remnant of God, the elect. They need to have one voice in this hour, crying out to God to avenge the church of the adversary.

In the Book of Revelation we read of a people who sang a song. No one else could learn that song and they could only learn that song in their sorrow and suffering, in their shame and the opposition they endured.

Revelation 14:1-3 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

It is given to you not only to believe, but also to suffer. Paul says that we have not only to believe for His name sake, but also to suffer for His name. So when they gave themselves to suffering, it developed in them a faculty to sing this song. That is what will bring this remnant to a cry in the depths. As one man they will cry before the throne. I believe that in the days to come the Lord will bring His remnant to that place of crying in the depths to the one who will hear them.

In Luke 18 we read of those who will cry day and night. And the cry must be there. The Lord has put these two things together. Until there is that cry there cannot be that avengement. Until this cry emanates from His people there cannot be a destruction of the enemy. It seems that the cry is essential. My own longing in my heart for all of us is that we may see this and we may act in our

lives. When we believe His word, we must also be alive to this word. The adversary has broken into many lives. He comes to steal, rob and destroy. He is very progressive in his work. May we be careful.

There are so many cries that emanate from God's people and from their own hearts—for healing, for that blessing, for that situation, for that purpose, for this need. It is true that we need to reach out to God and we have received answers to our situations, our cries, and our needs. We received answers to our prayers of many years, but we have not touched the real issues in our lives which remained untouched because even in the situations, our eyes did not see beyond the situations. Our prayers were only for relief from the situation. The real issues in our lives were never touched. Saints, it is my prayer that God would help to bring us beyond the situations that meet the eye. Our prayers should go beyond the depths.

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

Every time we have a situation, we look for an escape route. That is what our prayer is, but the true way of escape is to stay in the true will of the Father. To stay in His will is the place of rest. To stay in will of the Father is the place of our safety and protection in our situations. Many times we never touch the deep issues in our lives. We go from situation to situation. Many cries have gone out from our hearts, and we have received many answers, but my prayer is that there may be a different cry in these days. My prayer is that this pressure may bring me to a place of crying, "*Avenge me of my adversary O God!*"

The Holy Spirit is producing this cry, a united cry in His people, one voice to cry before the throne. God's hour synchronizes with our cries. God's time synchronizes with something other than our own time. He fixes His time in relation to something else. He may fix His time but He fixes it in relation to something else. His time is related to and fixed in relation to something else. In other words, the coming of the Lord's time may be appointed, but it is related to something else. His coming may be a fixed thing and an appointed thing, but it is related to something. His appearing to avenge the church is related to the cry of His people to avenge the church.

The children of Israel were in bondage for 400 years. The Lord had promised to bring them out with great substance. Way back in Genesis when there was no nation as Israel, the Lord had promised deliverance. But we see that the time was appointed in relation to the cry upon their hearts. God's hour synchronizes with something else. He doesn't fix the time but He fixes the time in relation to something. The coming of the Lord to this earth, His glorious return has been appointed by the Father and it is related to something on the earth as well as in His people. O may God open our eyes! He will avenge His church against the enemy. And when we see the children of Israel, we see the adversary becoming hard with Israel—hard and yet harder. Their cry resulted in a hardening of the adversary. There was a man in the wilderness that was being prepared. And everything synchronized. That is our God. His hour synchronizes with the cry of His people.

If the Lord by His Holy Spirit were to produce that cry in His church, we could settle in our hearts that His coming is very soon. Look at all that is happening in the church at large. The enemy has closed in and everything has come to a standstill. But today many preachers cannot understand this. They think that great things are happening by their preaching. When the Son of Man returns, will He find faith in the earth? The enemy is within the camp, but they don't realize it. It was startling to hear a story where a man was used as a prophet. He had been in ministry for many years and then it was revealed to him that he had a bad habit that he had not left. People come to salvation and leave their bad habits, but he succumbed to the old habit he had. He was in ministry and well-known and respected. But he was exposed. The enemy is closing in. He will not spare saints or leaders. He wants to come and destroy the instruments of the Lord. The enemy is doing this in the earth today. Many begin well but the enemy closes in and cuts them off.

Look how careful the apostle Paul was in his life. He repeatedly said to the leaders like Titus, 'Keep a critical eye upon *yourself* and the things you speak. In doing this you will save yourself and the ones who hear you.' But today leaders keep a critical eye upon *others*. They seem to think that Paul said to Titus to keep a critical eye upon *others!* The Scripture says take heed to thy self and in doing this you will save yourself. Paul called the elders and said take heed to yourself and the flock of God. First is the self and then others. May God save us.

This is the time to be alert to ourselves and the realities. See what the Lord said, "*Sin is crouching at your door.*" I can say the adversary is crouching at the door. We have to be very careful.

Paul says that the enemy withstood and hindered him. He was mightily used of God, anointed of God, a man of revelation, he had raised the dead; but he says the enemy hindered him. This is the reality and we need to know it. We can't take it lightly. Do you think that the Lord did not want Paul to go on or that He had allowed Satan to hinder Paul? Not at all, not in this case. But the enemy withstood and stopped him.

This is where we need to lay hold of the throne in these days for the release of the divine intention of the Lord for His people. Let God's divine will and purpose for His people be our portion. How will we lay hold of these things? We can lay hold of His throne through our cry as we prevail from our innermost beings. We need to come and seize this throne. It is very necessary.

I was reminded of the apostle Paul when I was meditating this morning. He writes,

Ephesians 6:18-19 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

Ephesians 6:18 (AMP) Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong

purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God's consecrated people).

Ephesians 6:19 And [pray] also for me, that [freedom of] utterance may be given me, that I may open my mouth to proclaim boldly the mystery of the good news (the Gospel)...

Paul's plea to the saints was that they may pray for him and that utterances be given to him that he may open his mouth boldly to preach the gospel. He needed the prayers of his people; he knew that there is an adversary and that there is a great battle.

There is a ministry here for us to prevail upon the throne for his remnant for God's purpose to be released and fulfilled in these last days in spite of the work of the adversary. We need to draw nigh, to have a revelation of His purpose and this word, to have a light in our being, and to have spiritual reinforcement in our lives so that we can come to that destiny in Christ Jesus. Here is our responsibility. Take it into your heart to be a people who will have a cry and will lay hold of the throne of God.

God's desire will be brought into operation by the cooperation of His remnant with Him. My prayer is that we as a church will be a part of that remnant, that we may be found in that travail. This is my prayer, this is my longing and this is my heart's craving for us that we will be a part of that remnant. Let us give ourselves to this call in our lives. Therefore give ourselves to His voice this morning and respond to this call as we step into this new year. When the Holy Spirit brings that cry upon the hearts of God's people, we will know that the time has come for Him to return.

There is a ministry here for His people to travail before the throne of God to avenge the church of the adversary. How much more will God avenge His own elect who will cry day and night before His presence.

The Need for Spiritual Sight

The Lord is in need of men and women who will serve His ends and His purpose. His need is great, and yet He may not bring a people into seeing His need at a particular time. He may not do that if He sees that His people are not ready for Him. His need is great, but He won't drag a people to meet His need just because His need is great. He waits until He gets people who can be brought into the fulfilling of His need. He waits till the heart of His people is broken by the things that are happening around them in their current situations. It is such a heart that will understand the situations around them that matter to the Lord. A heart-understanding is important for it is a heart matter with the Lord. God is looking for a people with a heart who would say, "Lord, the only justification for my life is that Your interests and purposes will be served." It must be a matter of heart-love for the Lord and for what is His purpose, not just for the ministry or the work of God. It must be but for the Lord and what is His.

Many people are willing to go into ministry when they want to do the work of God. But the word that Isaiah heard people talking was, "Who will go for us?" It is not a matter of a ministry or a work; it is a matter of a love for God and that which is His, His testimony and His purpose.

When the Lord gets you to that place, you will be seen as a man who is broken down and annihilated. When you come to a place of meeting His need, you will be a broken man because your eyes are open to see that the Lord does not get what He wants to get. Yes, we will be broken when we see that He does not get what He wants. And that becomes the travail of the soul. We would say, "Lord, what You desire is being universally rejected, neglected and set aside." Then you will see God doing something deeper within your being, deep within and without.

The Lord loves us, and His love comes in many ways, even bringing correction into our lives. The son whom He loves He also corrects. If you do not want to be corrected by the Spirit, you are not going to be a son in His kingdom. Today it is a tragedy in the spiritual world that no one wants correction. Hebrew 12 says you remain a bastard if you refuse correction. We remain a mixture and we will not grow up into His sons. We see the love of God coming to us as He brings correction upon our lives.

Let us read some important passages in Scriptures concerning seeing things in a spiritual way.

*Numbers 22:30-31 And the ass said unto Balaam, Am not I thine ass, upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? And he said, Nay. **Then the LORD opened the eyes of Balaam,** and he saw the angel of the LORD standing in the way, and his sword drawn in his hand: and he bowed down his head, and fell flat on his face.*

*Numbers 24:3-4 And he took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor hath said, and the man whose eyes are open hath said: He hath said, which heard the words of God, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, **but having his eyes open:***

Mark 10:46 *And they came to Jericho: and as he went out of Jericho with his disciples and a great number of people, **blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the highway side begging.***

Mark 10:51-52 *And Jesus answered and said unto him, What wilt thou that I should do unto thee? The blind man said unto him, Lord, that I might receive my sight. And Jesus said unto him, Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole. And **immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.***

Mark 8:22-25 *And he cometh to Bethsaida; and they bring a blind man unto him, and besought him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands upon him, he asked him if he saw ought. And he looked up, and said, I see men as trees, walking. After that he put his hands again upon his eyes, and made him look up: and he was restored, **and saw every man clearly.***

John 9:1-7 *And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) **He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.***

John 9:25 *He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, **whereas I was blind, now I see.***

Ephesians 1:17-18 *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: **The eyes of your understanding being enlightened;** that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*

Acts 26:18 ***To open their eyes,** and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

Revelation 3:18 *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, **that thou mayest see.***

In these many verses that stretch right across the Bible we read about spiritual seeing. Beholding the Lord and seeing Him in our lives is of crucial significance to us. If we are open we will come into a seeing in a real way.

As we contemplate the things in the spiritual world today, we see many weaknesses and maladies that have an effect upon our own lives. The greatest weakness is spiritual blindness amongst God's people. The root problem of our times is that spiritual blindness has struck God's people. We declare today to be a day of great achievement, a day of unequalled enlightenment among spiritual people, a day that is much better and brighter than previous times. That is our declaration; that is our claim. But the leaders are blind who lead others who are blind. That is what Jesus said. The blind are leading the blind. Generally speaking, God's people are blind as far as God's purpose is concerned. When it comes to welfare, they are ready to grab everything in the name of the Lord if it will help and benefit them. But as far as His purpose is concerned, they are blind in this hour. It is only when our eyes are opened will we be able to see that God is not getting what he ought to be getting, that God's own people have set aside His purpose.

The spiritual passages that have been quoted above show us that there are people who are spiritually blind. It begins with those who have never seen; those who are born blind. And then there are those who have been given vision, but are not able to see very clearly. One man could see partially, but could see better after a second touch. There are others who have a true and clear sight as we read in Ephesians 1. The realm of the divine thought and purpose are still waiting on others; the Holy Spirit has yet to open those things, a word has yet to be done in them, a fuller work is yet awaited in their lives where there needs to be a further opening of their eyes to see the divine thoughts and intents. Then again there are those who have seen and have followed the Lord and His ways but have lost their spiritual sight of that which they possessed at one time and have now become blind. At one time they could see and could follow, but since have lost that spiritual sight of those things which were theirs and have become blind with an additional fatal factor ruling them. That is terrible and that additional factor is that they still think they are seeing, though they in reality have lost it. That was the Laodicean condition. They were blind to their own blindness. That was their tragedy. Prophetically we are in the Laodicean age and I know that there is a fatal additional condition into which we have gone. It is a terrible state for anyone to be in—not sensing our loss.

In Balaam we find a representativeness of spiritual blindness. That is what we must see, and let none of us have a heart of offense. Balaam was blinded by gains. The prospect of gain in life kept him blind. This can happen to us, so let us examine our lives. We want to see, but we could be blind. In the New Testament we read of the 'way of Balaam' which means taking up the question of gain—seeing the things of God in terms of gains and loss. It can bring blindness to our spiritual eyes. Balaam was blind to the thoughts and purpose of God. He failed to see the Lord in the way and finally the Lord opened His eyes. It is the Lord Himself who stood in his way, though the word says that it was an angel (Numbers 24:3, 4 makes it clear that it was the Lord Himself). Such was Balaam's blindness, that he always thought of things that could affect *him*. He was blinded by personal considerations. May God watch over us! I do not stand here to be a judge over any one. To be blinded by personal considerations is a spiritual reality today. We may desire to see the Lord high and lifted up, but we must see whether we are blinded by other things; and if so we need deliverance. We can be blinded by personal considerations. If we pause

on this question, the Spirit will be faithful to help us. If we consider how *we* would benefit, what would affect *me*, what will it cost *me*, where do I stand in terms of *my* benefits, or what am *I* going to lose by way of this—that is the moment when darkness can overtake us to follow the way of Balaam.

We also have the example of Saul of Tarsus. Saul was a blind man because he had a religious zeal that made him blind. Zeal for tradition, for accepted things, for religious things can make us blind to the progressive things of God. Zeal for established and accepted things can make us blind towards the purpose of God. This is what we see all around—zeal for their own denomination, for their own ministry, for their own doctrine, for their own name. It leaves them blind to the further purpose of God. In Acts 26 we see the pronoun ‘I’ being used more often than anywhere else (especially verse 9 onwards—I thought, I also did, I this and I that). We see a principle even for our time. Our devotion to our tradition can bring blindness. Our devotion to the repetition of things we have been doing, to certain form and pattern that is separated from the Spirit, can cause blindness. How much we need to be sensitive. We may have a desire to see but we must check whether we have a blindness.

Saul was a man of great learning. Using the natural things is an indication of our spiritual blindness. Paul’s natural eyes were blinded when he met the Lord on the way to Damascus. With many people there are many things that hinder them from seeing the Lord and His purpose. The thing that hinders them from seeing spiritually is that they have seen too much naturally, or with their natural eyes, and that hinders them from seeing with their spiritual eyes. That can be a hindrance—seeing too much by the natural. They not only see too much, but they also see in the wrong way. Many therefore are seeing with natural senses and faculties of reason or of intellect. They are seeing the things of God with their much learning, and this is evident in the spiritual world. Only the Holy Spirit can help us to remove all that is in the way. Those things can really block our seeing. Saul of Tarsus stands there to give us that warning.

The Lord did a tremendous work in the life of Saul. His blindness was removed on the way to Damascus causing his spiritual eyes to see things he had never seen before. It left a mark upon his life from that day. From the day that the Lord met this man on the road to Damascus, something happened even to his natural eyes. It was like Jacob who never recovered from the touch of God upon the hollow of his thigh.

Galatians 4:15 Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.

Paul says, “You recognized that I had some problem with my eyes.” Jacob walked with a limp all the days of his life and the touch of God upon his thighs remained till the end. I sense and feel that this was true in the life of the apostle Paul as well. That mark lasted all his life. Saints, what a touch that was! It reminded the man of God that spiritual seeing is so different from what you can gather from knowledge via our senses. We can talk spiritual things with our natural mind and yet be a blind people as far as God’s purpose is concerned. But Saul’s life and the commission that he received on the road to Damascus was all about the eyes. It was all about seeing and not a

ministry. This is what he repeated in Acts 26 when he told King Agrippa that he was not disobedient to that which he saw with his eyes. It was not a ministry but a seeing; not doing this and that. The commission on the road to Damascus was all about seeing spiritually, about eyes, about seeing that took him to the last day of his life.

Let us not play with the things of God. It is time to strip ourselves of our own ideas and things. May God help us. We are coming into serious times in God's purpose. These are not times to justify our ways but times to be open before God.

Every spiritual eyesight is a miracle from God. It cannot come about by our effort but when we are open to God, there could be an intervention of God. When there is a strong cry accepting that we are blind and blinded by things, then the Holy Spirit will intervene.

John 12:46 I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.

John 9:5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

After saying these words, He goes about opening the eyes of a blind man. He illustrates that He is the light of the world by dealing with a man who was born blind. So spiritual sight is a miracle from God and we must accept this, for it is the foundation of our lives. Unless a man be born again he cannot see. This means that when a man is born again he begins to see. It is in seeing that we begin our spiritual life. But remember that it is a continual, progressive seeing.

On the road to Damascus, Paul had a meeting with God and then we see that he spent several years in Arabia and then he beheld the Lord more clearly. He waited on God and there was a further seeing and beholding in his life. And every work of seeing was a work of heaven. With every fragment of truth, there needs to be a seeing in our lives; we must be brought into a place of seeing, a seeing that is beyond our power. It has to be from above. That is clearly seen in Paul's life. Every fragment of truth brought him to a place of beholding the Lord. Spiritual life is not only a miracle in its inception. It is a continuous miracle to the very end of our lives. Because we have heard the word, or desire to see the things of God, or prayed a good prayer, it does not mean we are there. There has to be act of God in our lives. That is beyond our power. But in all those blind men we see that they acknowledged that they were blind. If we think we already see, then it is a fatal addition to our blindness. That is a tragedy that has hit God's people, and my cry is that this may not be our condition. May God help us. I share this with a heaviness of heart that we should not be such. May we give ourselves to the Spirit. The effect of the loss of spiritual sight is terrible. To lose spiritual vision is terrible. Many who could see at one time have lost the ability to see. That has happened again and again. And it can happen with us as well.

To lose the spiritual vision is to lose the supernatural feature of our spiritual life. That will produce the Laodicean state in us. Let us realize our true spiritual condition. The Laodicean church had not only lost this spiritual feature of their life but they were not willing to accept that. We don't want the certificates of man nor man's approval. The commission that God has wrought in our hearts is that we may fit into His purpose. It is not a matter of name or

organization. If we were to go after organization or make a name for ourselves, we would not have been in the condition we are in today. There were times when we looked at our satisfaction and did not think about God. In the spiritual world we seldom hear about failure! Every meeting is a great success and one is better than the other. We don't want falsehoods, for that brings us into that category that has that additional factor in our lives. O may God help us. See what the Lord says about the Laodicean church:

Revelation 3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Why did the Lord say these words to the Laodicean church? It was because they had lost the supernatural feature of their calling. They had become earthly and religious. They came out of the heavenly place. May we be serious about this and not come out of our place that God has brought us in by His mercy. Let us be open and be given to the Spirit of God. The greatest need in this hour is that God would have a people who would be able to see by the power of the Spirit an intervention of God, a miracle in their lives. We can say that in the history of God's people there never was a time that there could be a people who could arise and say that they see what is upon the heart of God. That is the great need in this hour. Until a people will arise with such a seeing, there is no hope. Our hope hangs upon what we see, beloved people of God. At this time of confusion and chaos, tragedy and contradiction, there is a dire need for a remnant that would arise and see what is upon God's heart, for a ministry that would stand up and say that they see what is upon God's heart. This would bring a new prospect, saints. That is the need—such a people. That is our challenge. It would not be men who have studied much or read much, not men who have prepared a great deal, but men who have *seen*. That is what God is in need of. With deep conviction and burden I want to say that we must be open in the Spirit to see the blindness upon our lives. What is in the way? Let us not justify ourselves. We are not here for anything but God's purpose and that alone binds us together. Let us be humble and open our lives to correction.

John 9:13-18 They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them. They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet. But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.

We find that ever since this man's eyes were opened there were difficulties. Finally they went to the parents of the one whose eyes were opened and asked them whether he was their son. We see something happening here.

John 9:19-25 And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner. He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.

Jesus said I am the light, and He brought this man out of darkness. But the powers of darkness could not hold on to that and accept it. The Pharisees went to the parents and then again they called the man that was blind to verify the reality. The same powers stay today in our midst, “Is this your daughter who went to Delhi to study? What has happened to his child?” And the parents say, “We have only one thing to say that this is our daughter who went to Delhi ten years ago. Do not ask us anything more for she is of age.” The parents of the blind men said this because they were afraid of the Pharisees.

There is a price we have to pay if we come to a place of seeing. There is a cost involved. Let us not think that seeing and beholding is just something pleasurable and a great gain in this world. Let me say clearly that it may cost us everything and may even bring challenges to your parents and the ones you love. Because there is immense value of seeing that we have not even touched so far, there will be a knowing of this by Satan. He knows what will happen to him when the miracle of eyes being opened is received by the people. The prince of this world has blinded the eyes of the world. Blessed are those whose eyes are open. Ask them. An unexplainable something has happened in them.

Saints, there is a great need today for the eyes of people to be opened. Verse 25 is very explicit. One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I can see. What a need there is for people who can stand in that position of this man. It is a great thing to be in that position and say that there is one thing I know, that I was blind, but now I can see. How much I do not know is not the matter. But what matters is that my eyes are opened. The issue is one thing—the miracle of seeing. I do not know many things, but one thing I know, that what I know is born of God. What I know is a divine act. Can we say that? Can we be in that position? May God bring this conviction upon our hearts.

What an impact came upon this man? What a registration there was upon his life? Life and light always go together. If a man really sees, there is always life. This is the reality. That is a great challenge. There is much we have not seen but can we say, “Now I see and what I see is a miracle of God. It is an act of God.” From initiation to consummation our spiritual lives must have this secret that now we can see. That was true of the apostle Paul and it has got to be true in our lives. We are maintained in this atmosphere of a miracle where we can see. It is an

atmosphere where there are fresh occasions to come into places where we have never seen before. That is the intensity by which we must be drawn to God. Let there be an intense hunger that seems as if you had never known the Lord before. That is the intent by which we must come; not just seeing for the sake of seeing, but with a hunger and longing for Him.

May the Lord make us a people whose eyes have been opened by God. Let us be sensitive, for I see the love of God visiting us. It will become more visible in the days to come. Whether we continue our days in blindness or whether we would be able to say "Now I see" will depend on our hunger for the Lord.

The Spoils of Battle

God has been faithful to speak to us in our hearing ears. As we have always heard, it is one thing to hear good things from His word, but it is another thing to hear them with spiritual ears. The Lord is no respecter of persons, so let us be open to hear the Spirit. May we be open to the Lord for the liberty in the Spirit.

1 Chronicles 26:27 KJV *Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the LORD.*

1 Chronicles 26:27 (AMP) *From spoil won in battles they dedicated gifts to maintain the house of the Lord.*

There are slight variations in different translations. One translation puts it this way. “*Out of the battles and the spoils did they dedicate to repair the house of the Lord.*” The spoils that they received in the battles were used to maintain or repair the house of the Lord.

The Lord has been ministering these words to my heart. The emphasis in this passage is not so much on the battle but on the repair of the house of the Lord. This is what the Lord has been ministering to me. I have been seeking the Lord to keep my focus upon the Lord. There are many situations in our lives, but to remain focused on the Lord is the main battle. This verse which emphasizes the repair and maintenance of the house of the Lord appears to be quite strange when one meditates on it.

The root word for *repair* or *maintain* here means *to strengthen* or *to make sound or pure, to consolidate*. It would mean that out of the battles or spoils did they strengthen the House of God, to make it sound in the mind of God. There are battles connected to the process of building. When the house of God is built there are battles. When the temple was being restored there was opposition and battles. And there are battles even when the building is raised. There is a need to preserve the building and a need for it to be maintained. The original splendor and glory is kept and maintained till the end. The glory of the house of God has to be maintained perpetually. In other words, there needs to be something that maintains it according to God’s thoughts. Let us be open to hear what God has to say. It is an important word for the times in which we are, and for the times ahead.

There needs to be something that maintains the glory of the House. There are battles when the house is being built, and there will be battles even when the house has been built. Something is necessary to maintain it according to God’s original thought for His house. In the New Testament times even after the Lord had raised up churches, when Paul went to these places there were battles, but there were battles also when the churches had been raised. There are different kinds of battles when the believers have been set together as a body of people. There is a need to maintain the call of God and the purpose of God in the midst of God’s people. That purpose under which God Has brought us together must be preserved and secured. The body that has been established by the Lord has to be maintained with the initial purpose which must be

strengthened from time to time. The purpose of God for which He has raised us up, that vision which He has given us, with which we have been assembled, that calling that has brought us together must be preserved and consolidated from time to time. That is God's mind and strategy and His wisdom is far greater than the wisdom of man. So out of the spoils of the battle the house of God is going to be strengthened, preserved and maintained.

God allows conflicts in the lives of His people. In His divine sovereignty God allows conflicts, and we see this right through the word of God. The divine wisdom of God working sovereignly allows conflicts to come to keep things strong, pure and healthy. That is His wisdom—His ways and means to preserve His original purpose—to keep things strong in God's house and in the lives of God's people. Battles seem to be necessary for the purity that God is seeking to have for Himself. The Lord is seeking to have a habitation for Himself, a glorious bride, an overcoming church, to have what He has desired in His heart. Conflicts in the Diving judgments are essential to maintain the House of God. We often find it difficult to look upon conflicts with this thought or angle. To regard the terrific conflicts that we go through individually and even corporately as things that God wants to have to maintain the call of God, and as necessary for the building of the House of God, is strange to many of us. That is where our wisdom is so different and lower than the wisdom of God. We have all experienced conflicts and battles, but we need to underline a few things.

Firstly, these battles are bound to increase in intensity in these days. Sometimes they get almost if not altogether beyond the powers of our endurance. There will be little let-up from these conflicts. The number of battles, the pressures, the intensity may increase in the coming days. In the word it says that it was out of the spoils that they won in 'battles' (plural). It is not just one battle but several battles. We are into a warfare where there are many battles. We have faced many spiritual battles in the initial days when we came to the Lord and in the times when we took the first steps in the Lord, and we have seen the enemy coming as a flood, experienced the fury of the oppressor, the constant presence of the evil to destroy our lives. We also must have had questions as to why God allowed this. Even though we know this, yet we had questions in our mind and we wondered why the Lord would not cut it short, why it had to be prolonged, why it could not be curtailed. And in this verse which we are meditating upon, we find the answer. It is all for the sake of the repair of the House of the Lord. It is to maintain the original call that is resting upon our lives.

When we examine the history of things in the word of God, or the history of God's people, it is found to be true that where there has been a true increase, a maintaining by the Lord, a preservation of His house and His purpose, it has always come in the line of a battle, of conflict in the lives of God's people. And they have gained from deep experiences of conflicts and battles in their lives. The Lord has deeply convinced me of this truth. The Lord has stirred my heart in these thoughts. Any gain from the increase, preservation and maintaining of His original thoughts has come from the line of battle. That is God's wisdom. There is no other way that God can maintain this call upon our lives. We see this clearly in the New Testament where God's

church was made secure through trials, pressures and adversities. In the glorious years of the early church, the church maintained the call upon their lives. They went through many pressures and adversities, and all these maintained that original glow and call. This is so encouraging to see. This is a reality. This is God's wisdom to keep His purity.

This house of God, the church, if it were literal then we could have gone around it and related to it. In the natural we say that we had nothing but God who provided us this house, this thing and that thing. We can point our finger and say that a certain thing in our life is a result of such and such a thing. We can point to our cycle or car and say that it is a result of my earning or my father's gift to me. We can relate in this way to the natural things we have. This is true in the spiritual building as well. May we have that sense in our spirit. Individually and corporately we can say that so and so thing was a result of such and such a thing. May we be able to say that this spiritual thing I have is a result of this situation.

One brother told me that he had received something very specific from the Lord in these days. He said he could not have received it in any other way. Just as we can say in our natural life that this is out of this or that, may God give us the spiritual ability to see what has come out of which situation in our lives. And that is how God is maintaining and preserving this call. "If it had not been for that terrible time and situation in my life, Lord, this would not have been possible." If it had not been for that trial in my life, this part of the building would not have come about Lord. God's securing ways are so different. What the early church secured through trials and difficulties is so different from the way we secure spiritual things today. May God strengthen our hearts.

You and I can say, as we look at our lives, that we have come to a place of establishment due to some particularly difficult times that we had experienced. It is the same in the spiritual realm. If we are sensitive, this truth holds good for now and the days to come. On that day of the Lord, maybe the Lord will tell us or show us what we acquired spiritually in the trials and temptations, pressures and we will say, "I see that now Lord. The value of that came out of this situation." This good came out of that trial. It is all built into that eternal purpose of God that God is securing, maintaining, preserving and establishing. God allows adversities in our lives.

Out of the spoils the house of God is secured. Those things were used to recover and to maintain that glory which was lost. That is what the Lord has been placing on my heart. In the terrible days of persecution, God allowed His remnant to go through many kinds of trials and temptations. He did this to recover and restore something that was lost in the church. That which was lost in the original was restored in and through a people who were willing to give themselves to all the conflicts they endured. Through their struggles, persecutions and sufferings the purity was maintained. The fullness was restored, the calling and purpose was maintained. Through opposition, reproaches and persecutions, the breakdowns were secured.

That is what God is doing even today. He will put His remnant in the earth today, put us through something, and out of that He will secure something that is necessary to guard against the threats that are against the church. The Lord will put us through situations to guard against that which is

about to be lost, that which is a threat to the purpose of God, that which is being attacked by the enemy, so that God's people would not lose that. The Lord in His wisdom counters the enemy through our suffering, difficulties and trials and guards against those things which are under threat of the enemy and about to be lost.

Even to maintain this calling in our lives, to maintain the goal and purpose of God in our lives, we will have to go through trials and suffering, individually and collectively. The Lord allows the enemy to come against us. And we can take the enemy and show him the results of his onslaughts in our lives. This is not for his satisfaction or benefit, for we can say to him, "You meant to destroy me, but it has worked in another way in my life." May God strengthen our hearts and our spirits in these days.

When the Lord sees a threat from the enemy to His own house, or some kind of loss to His house, or some kind of threat over His testimony, wanting to bring some kind of deviation or loss to His people, He sees it well in advance. David cries out, "Lord preserve me from evil men, violent men." That word *preserve* means from the hidden schemes of the evil. We cannot see the hidden things of the enemy, but the Lord can. So the Lord can see the threat to this call, to the purpose of God that is about to come upon us. There needs to be a strengthening, therefore, and a repairing and a recovery is necessary. He is able to see the weakness coming in to us. The way that the Lord counters the enemy is to bring us into situations. We cannot see this, but He can. This is beyond our comprehension. He lets the enemy in through circumstances in the lives of God's people. The Lord allows the enemy to come into our lives not only in the process of evangelism and bringing in of people, but even after that. This can be seen from the lives of the apostles. This is God's way to keep the house pure and the calling secure. My prayer is that this may go deep into our hearts.

We cannot keep the Lord's house secure by mere doctrine. Listen. Many think we can do so by a pure ministration of the pure word or sound doctrine. We must have a sound word, but many times we think it is enough. It does not work out that way. This does not mean we don't need sound doctrine, but that in itself will not be able to keep the house pure. To keep things pure something more is needed. We will never keep things holy according to God's mind by a sound, a God-given word, or by an orthodox teaching. But those sound and precious teachings from God's word are kept living and pure through our situations, trials, and conflicts that are linked to the call of God. We go through challenges, reproaches, oppositions and it is there that the sound doctrine is kept living and pure. There is no easy way if we want to be a part of this call of God.

Every bit of truth that we receive livingly will take us into conflicts and it will be established through conflicts. There is a lot to meditate here. If the truth is received livingly it will lead us to reproaches and conflicts, it will put us into opposition and rejections. And if we are to be established in that truth then we will face more conflicts. It will be worthless until there has been a battle over it. Anything of the Lord is worthless until there has been a battle over it. We have to fight over anything that is of the Lord. If the Lord calls you to take up any position in this call and if you are to stand up with Him, you will certainly have to be engaged in battle. In Exodus

32 when Moses asked who was on the Lord's side, how many stood with him? Only the Levis stood with him, but it was not an easy stand. It immediately brought upon them a battle. It is worthless until every stand is brought into conflict! There we see what happened to them. They took their swords and they came into conflict with their own brethren, their own kith and kin. That was their call. Any time we take up His purpose we will have to take a stand. There will be an element of battle. Any stand, any conviction, any truth, any position that you have to take up in this calling involves a battle. If you have said yes to the Lord when the Spirit has convicted you in your heart, then you have not come to that place yet. You will get to that only when you have gone through a conflict. The real value is only proved after you have gone through a conflict and a battle.

We may have agreed and been convinced of all that the Lord has said, we may assent to all we have heard from the Lord, but it is still not proved until you face the element of opposition, battle, suffering, conflict, and rejections that will come our way. There is no other way, for this is the wisdom of God. We haven't got there, we have not come into the real significance of the truth, the real ground of that conviction by the word to us, if we have not faced the battle and gone through the suffering in relation to that. The enemy comes and afflicts us and we wonder where the divine sovereignty of the Lord lies. Can the enemy do just as he likes? No, he cannot, but the Lord allows it, as we read in His word, to position you, consolidate you, make you to cling to the cross, the purpose of God, to bring you into His eternal values which we have been cherishing all this while. He allows us to go through these trials to bring us into those values that are eternal. The Lord knows that you are going to get something out of this conflict. He sees that often we take a spiritual position mechanically that will not bring us to that place in Christ. We have to come to these things spiritually and not mechanically or in any other way and that is why the Lord allows us to go through conflicts to attain His purpose in Christ. Out of such battle some extra will come. In all the battle there is something that the Lord will secure for His house.

The apostle Paul says in Romans, "*We are more than conquerors.*"

Romans 8:37-39 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I have been seeking the Lord to reveal to me the true meaning of this. The Lord eventually spoke to me and I have been greatly blessed by a fresh understanding of these verses.

The Lord doesn't just bring us to victory for the sake of victory. We simply do not fight battles to win them. In my little understanding, I have always thought that battles are to be won. Victories have to be won. We fight in order to win. The apostle Paul said we are more than conquerors meaning that we have more than victories. He said that it is not that we have victory over these things, but there is something more. I can say to my brother that you have had more than victories. We have battles not only to have victory, but we have much more according to the

purpose of God. Let the Lord open our eyes. Our fights are not to just have victory. For us to be more than conquerors means to be more than just being victorious. Something out of those battles, out of those victories, must come to us. It is not a matter of winning battles or overcoming something, but there is something more—more than victory. It is something that causes you to maintain the house of God. That something more is that which will enhance the glory of the Lord in our lives. That is more than a conqueror, and I was greatly strengthened by what the Lord wanted to minister to us.

We are not only to overcome the enemy. We have not only to beat the enemy to cause him some loss, but in the battle we are to get something out of him that will benefit the glory of the Lord. The spoils of the battle will be to the glory of the house of the Lord. Can you imagine that this enemy has something that can be used and enhanced for the purpose of God? That baffles the mind. That the enemy has things of value to God is difficult to understand. We know that the enemy robbed man in the beginning. We are more than conquerors to not only defeat him but to rob him of those things that he had taken from man. That blessed my heart so much.

It is not a matter of having victory, but of taking those ‘extras’ from the enemy and being restored back to God’s eternal purpose that is secured through the battle. The enemy has taken much from man and that has to be taken back to beautify the Bride of Christ. It is to this end that Christ died on the Cross to bring forth a glorious bride. The enemy has to be plundered so that a people enter into that realm. May God help us!

We are to be more than conquerors. Let this be more meaningful to us now. It is out of these battles and conflicts that the Lord would receive that which could be used to strengthen, maintain, and keep you healthy in the house of God. We need to seek His grace that we can face these conflicts in our lives, and stand because of the position we have taken in deep convictions of the word of God. We have taken positions in obedience to His word and revealed will to us, to His purpose. The conflicts will come because of the way we have taken in obedience to His voice. We are following Him in our lives and we know deep within that this is the way of the Lord. As a result of that we are thrown into the whirlwind of suffering, rejection, and reproaches. May we remember that it is not loss that lies in that direction, but it is a pain in that direction. It is not a matter of just victory, but of some ‘extra’ valuable thing that we will take out of the enemy from the situation. The conflict will yield something for the Lord, something for His house, and something for this call that is resting upon us.

Let us really take this call seriously in our lives. If we receive His word and His voice, we will see the reality of this word in our lives. Let us keep our eyes focused on the Lord. I don’t stand here to judge anyone, but if you are open, the Lord will show where you stand and where you are in situations. May the Lord help all of us! Many times we can take a stand based upon our convictions, but we haven’t come there in our lives. Several haven’t come into this reality because the value has not been proved in their lives. Every bit of truth will bring us into a conflict. The battle will establish us in the truth.

If we accept the word, we will be challenged. Let it not be that we accept the word, but not the pressure that it brings. Let us not be a people who merely appreciate the word but not the value of the trial that comes afterwards. Any position we take will bring us into conflict. Anything we take in obedience to His word will bring a challenge. We must readily accept that challenge. Let us face the pressure, the trial, the battle. David said that the Lord is the preserver of his life but we see that he was running from cave to cave. He must have wondered where the sovereign hand of the Lord was in the midst of his trials. The trials came not because he was merely a shepherd boy looking after the sheep, but because the anointing oil had been poured upon his head. That calling brought him into the situations. God was wanting a man who would fulfill His purpose. There are many other examples from the Lord's word about battles—right there on the surface of things; don't have to do much digging into the word to see this. David and every company of people who walk this way will have to go this way. May the Lord give us strength to take hold of conflicts by faith, wherever and whenever they come and whichever way they come.

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