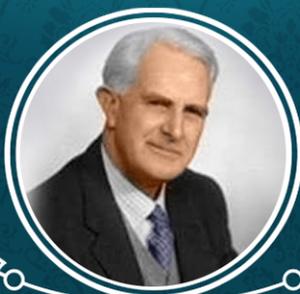




IN CHRIST



T AUSTIN SPARKS



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By T. AUSTIN-SPARKS

CHAPTER ONE

THE ALL-INCLUSIVE "IN"

There is no phrase or formula, which occurs with greater frequency in the New Testament than this, "in Christ." It sometimes varies in translations when "by" and "through" and "with" are used, and sometimes in the original text it changes in form, e.g., "in Christ Jesus," "in him," etc., but in all the two hundred times of its occurrence the principle is the same. In the whole range of Christian dogma there is nothing more expensive, and yet nothing less understood and appreciated.

In one consummate declaration we are told that God has purposed to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10) and that outside of Him there is nothing which has any place in the eternal purpose and intention of God. The plan, the method, the resources, the times, the eternities, are Christospheric.

The Creation is IN Christ.

The Life is IN Christ.

The Acceptance is IN Christ.

The Redemption is IN Christ.

The Righteousness is IN Christ.

The Sanctification is IN Christ.

The Hope is IN Christ.

The Spiritual Blessings are IN Christ.

The Consolation is IN Christ.

The Peace is IN Christ.

The Effectual Prayer is only IN Christ.

The Strength and Riches are IN Christ.

The Eternal Purpose is IN Christ.

The New Creation is IN Christ.

The Promises are IN Christ.

The Escape from Condemnation is IN Christ.

The One Body is IN Christ.

The Perseverance is IN Christ.

The Gathering into One is IN Christ.

The Bonds of Suffering Believers are IN Christ.

The "No Separation" is IN Christ.

The Perfect Man is IN Christ.

The Helpers Together are IN Christ.

There are the Churches IN Christ.

There are the Dead IN Christ.

There is the One New Man and the Perfect Man IN Christ.

We are Complete IN Christ.

The context of this formula ranges from eternity, through the ages, to eternity.

In eternity past we were chosen and elected together IN Christ. Eph. 1:4; 1

Pet. 5:13.

Through time, by the Cross, this eternal heavenly fact is wrought in literal and experimental form expressed by different terms implying specific progressive spiritual truths, but always the same principle.

"Planted together in the likeness of his death. Rom. 6:5

"Quickened... together with Christ." Eph. 2:6

"Raised... up together... in Christ." Eph. 2:6

"Made... to sit together... in Christ." Eph. 2:6

"All things to be gathered together... in Christ." Eph. 1:10

"Perfected together." 1 Cor. 1:10

"Fitly framed together" in Christ. Eph. 2:21

"Knit together," Col. 2:2

"Builded together" in Christ. Eph. 2:20

"Live together with him." 1 Thess. 5:10

"Working together with him." 2. Cor. 6:1

"Striving together." Phil. 1:27

Then comes a climax, at the end of this time, when all the foregoing is accomplished and we are "together... caught up." 1 Thess. 4:17

Finally the eternity to come looms into view and we see that we are to be

"glorified together" with Him. Rom. 8:17

Then we call to mind the Pauline couplet - which is strictly not Pauline but of the Divine Spirit of truth - namely "in Adam" and "in Christ." On the one side - our relation to Adam, the old creation, by nature - we see one set

of conditions; and on the other - by our incorporation in Christ - we see a new and different set.

"IN ADAM"

"The Lord God... breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." Gen. 2:7

"The first man Adam became a living soul." 1 Cor. 15:45

"In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Gen. 2:17

"As in Adam all die." 1 Cor. 15:22

"The law of sin and of death." Rom. 8:2

"He also is flesh." Gen. 6:3

"The flesh profiteth nothing." John 6:63

"I" - Failure. Rom. 7

"The old man that waxeth corrupt." Eph. 4:22

"The mind of the flesh." Rom. 8:6

"In my flesh... no good thing." Rom. 7:18

"Of the flesh... corruption." Gal. 6:8

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh." John 3:6

"The end... death." Rom. 6:21

"IN CHRIST"

"He breathed on them, and saith unto them Receive ye the Holy Spirit."
John 20:22

"The last Adam... a life-giving spirit." 1 Cor. 15:45

"Newness of life." Rom. 6:4

"In Christ shall all be made alive." 1 Cor. 15:22

"The law of the Spirit of life." Rom. 8:2

"Spirit" - Victory. Rom. 8

"The new man... created in righteousness and holiness of truth." Eph. 4:24

"The new man." Col. 3:10

"Newness of the spirit." Rom. 7:6

"In the likeness of his resurrection." Rom. 6:5

"Have crucified the flesh." Gal. 5:24

"Our old man was crucified." Rom. 6:6

All this, which is nothing more than quoting Scripture, will serve to emphasize the Divine inclusiveness and exclusiveness, and will help, we trust, to recognition of the great fact that **NO MAN CAN LIVE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE; THERE IS ONLY ONE WHO CAN LIVE THAT LIFE, AND THAT IS CHRIST**

HIMSELF. We must have such an experimental incorporation into Him that He lives His life through us as members of His one Body, so that "to me to live is Christ" and "it is no longer I... but Christ." As the blacksmith's iron is in the fire and also the fire is in the iron, so first we must realize our position in Christ through the Cross ere Christ can manifest Himself through us.

CHRIST TO BE EXPRESSED THROUGH BELIEVERS

It is very important to recognize a truth upon which Christ laid considerable emphasis, that is, that in a sense, He never intended to be out of this world again during the age, after having once come into it as His rightful heritage. He came to redeem it, to secure the judicial right to sovereignty in it, and to initiate, continue, and complete the restoration of it to His own dominion. This is all to be done by His own presence in it in one or other of the forms of His manifestation. While He said much about going away, and returning to the Father, He also made His abiding very clear in the words, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the consummation of the age." Paul later said that the central feature or reality of "the mystery... hid from the ages..." is "Christ in you, the hope of glory."

The personal physical presence of Christ in the world was firstly to manifest the nature, method, means, laws, purpose, and power of His abiding presence beyond the days of His flesh; and secondly to make this possible and actual by the work of His Cross. He Who was born out from God shows what is the necessity for and the nature of being "born of the Spirit" if the will of God is to be done on the earth as it is done in the heavens. Then right at the commencement of His ministry He puts the Cross in the figure of baptism. From that time all that He said and did was in the light and power of the Cross. The teaching of Christ can never be effectual, and the works of Christ can never be continued, unless the Cross is the basis. To try to propagate

"the teaching of Jesus" or to effect the work of Jesus without having as the basis all that He meant by His Cross, is to labor in vain and without the acceptance of the Father. It will be necessary to return to this connection again at a later stage. So far, however, it leads us to the point where we see that, having in His personal physical presence established the basis and nature of His permanent work, He by the Cross effected that which made possible the bringing of men on to the same plane or into the same realm, and then changed the separate and individual presence for the corporate

and universal. Thus "the church, which is His body" was brought into being as the abiding instrument of His world-incarnation. This is the only kind of "church" which He recognizes, made up of those who have been "joined unto the Lord... one spirit." The nature of this joining remains also for later consideration. The word or term "Body" is not mere metaphor. The members of His Body stand in relation to Christ just as our physical bodies stand in relation to our own selves - the means of manifestation, expression, and transaction. This truth is very discriminating, and goes to the root of all matters of life and service. "Working for the Lord," "praying to the Lord," etc., will be seen to have a deeper law which governs their effectiveness.

We cannot take up work for Christ - plan, scheme, devise, organize or enter upon Christian enterprise - and so command the Divine seal and blessing. We cannot pray as we incline, even though it be to the extent of passion and tears, and so secure the Divine response. Failure to recognize this is bringing multitudes of people to despair because of no seal upon their ardent labors, and no answer to their prayers. In the unfolding of the laws of His own effective life the Master put tremendous emphasis upon the fact that the words that He spoke, and the works that He did, were not of (out from) Himself, it was the Father both speaking the words and doing the works. A thorough study of the Gospel by John will convince that this was so. Said Christ, "The Son can do nothing out from himself, but what he seeth the Father doing..." and this knowledge of the transactions of the Father as to what, how, and when - all most important - was, as He made clear, because He abode in the Father. So for all the future of His work He prayed that His disciples might abide in Him. Thus the law of effective and fruitful life, service, prayer, etc., is that there shall be such a oneness that we only do - but surely do - what He is doing. We must know in our spirit just what Christ is doing, how He is doing it, the means, which He will use, and His time for it. Moreover, our prayers must be the prayers of the Lord Himself prayed in us and through us by the Holy Spirit. This is surely made very clear as being the realm in which the Church in apostolic times lived. This will demand a considerable sifting of all undertakings in the name of Jesus, and will require that nothing is done until the mind of the Lord has been made known. But this will secure a hundred percent effectiveness, and issues, which will never perish. For the practical purposes of God in this age Christ is the One Body holding fast the Head,

and the business of every member is to realize more and more fully the meaning of this incorporation and oneness of identity.

We are expressly told in the Word that we are to "put on the new man" and that this "new man" is Christ. This is but another form of expressing the truth of "in Christ," but it carries with it a whole revelation of practical provision.

Christ is our Redemption. He "was made unto us... redemption." 1 Cor. 1:30; Rom. 3:24; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14.

Christ is our Righteousness. 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 4:24; Phil. 3:9.

Christ is our Sanctification. 1 Cor. 1:2,30.

Christ is our Faith. Mark. 11:22 ("Have the faith of God," lit. trans.); Acts. 26:18; Gal. 2:20 (R.V.); Eph. 1:15; Phil. 3:9; Col. 1:4.

Christ is our Peace. John 14:27; John 16:33; Eph. 2:14.

This line can be followed on numerous characteristics, e.g. Love, Hope, Wisdom, Mind, Power and Might, Authority, Glory. We suggest a comparison of translations in the references, best of all in the original. The point is that, on all these matters, under given conditions the natural outfit will break down and will have to be laid aside, but in Christ we have a new equipment at every point. For instance, our faith will not take the strain of the requirements of a deep experience of trial and adversity, but if we "live by the faith of the Son of God," the issue will be different. All tests will prove whether we are living by His faith, which should have become ours, or whether there is a weakness in our union with Him. The same is true on all points. It is blessed to realize that

"in Christ" we have a whole new and saving endowment of virtues and graces. Thus it is that we "put away... the old man... and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." (Eph. 2:22-24)

SOME SIGNIFICANT PREPOSITIONS

So far we have been led in our theme by three simple Greek prepositions, namely: ek - out from; en - in; and sun - together.

These three fragments really summarize the truth and nature of corporate union with Christ, and lay down the essential laws and vital principles of all true and effective spiritual life and service. Some further consideration of this may be well before proceeding further. Christ took great care to repudiate any suggestion and to remove any notion that anything which characterized His mission as Son of man was of His own originating.

1. "EK"

(a) As to Himself. He repeatedly affirmed "I came out from God." (John 7:29; 8:42; 17:8, etc.).

(b) As to His apostleship (Heb. 3:1), He describes Himself as "sent" by God (Gr. apostello) (John 3:17, 34; 5:36; 6:29,57; 7:29; 8:42; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21).

(c) As to His vision: "What he seeth the Father doing... these the Son also doeth." (John 5:19).

(d) As to His works: "The works of my Father" (John 5:36; 9:3, 4; 10:25, 32, 37; 14:10).

(e) As to the words: "I speak not of (out from) myself" (John 8:28, 38; 12:49; 14:10; 17:8,14).

(f) As to the Kingdom: "My kingdom is not of (out from) this world" (John 18:36).

(g) This can all be gathered up under a statement in which a different preposition is used in the Greek but one conveying a similar thought: "Now they know that all things... are from thee." (John 17:7.).

The main principle which these all-embracing declarations establish is that only that which proceeds out from God is recognized by God, fulfils the Divine purpose, reaches the Divine standard, and returns to God. This implies that there are other sources than God. Over against some of the foregoing statements regarding Divine origins the Master has placed such as:

1. "Ye are of (out from) your father the devil." "Ye do the works of (out from) your father," etc. (John 8:44, 41).

2. "Not of (out from) myself." (John 14:10) This was said, of course, in His capacity of representing man as "made in the likeness of sinful flesh," not as Son of God on the side of Deity. It was ever the enemy's endeavour to get Him to act in the flesh, as man would act, so that the enemy might have ground upon which to wreck Him, but He refused to act on the principle of the flesh. Thus it is clear - and all the Scriptures combine to show it - that the flesh is a source of things, which have no acceptance with God, even though they operate through religious forms and "Christian" enterprises.

3. Further, "the world" is spoken of constantly as producing much which God refuses and only hands over to judgment. See the occurrences of "of" (out from) as to the world in John 17, and look further in John's Epistles, with a general comparison with the teaching of Peter and Paul.

Thus we are brought to see that a special Divine significance attaches to that which is "of God."

Now what is true of Christ has to have a counterpart in all who are to be either owned of God or used to the fulfillment in any way of His eternal purpose.

They must be:

(a) Born of (out from) God.

(b) Commissioned of (out from) God.

(c) Have a spiritual revelation and vision of (out from) God. (d) Speak the

words of (out from) God.

(e) Do only the works of (out from) God.

(f) Seek first the Kingdom of (out from) God.

(g) Be sure that in their case "all things are of (out from) God." (2 Cor. 5:18).

This was the apostolic basis. The Holy Spirit had come to make this both possible and actual. This accounts, therefore, for the effectiveness of their testimony and labors. They knew what it meant to be baptized "in one Spirit... into one body," of which Body Christ is Head, so that really the Sovereign Head but carried on His work through the members thus incorporated. They had no independent action, no self-laid plans, no schemes or enterprises or undertakings which were the product of their own thought, reasoning, devising, or enthusiasm, even though it were "for Christ," or "for the Kingdom," or "in His name." All had to come by revelation of the Spirit from the Head.

Now the second preposition shows how this was so in Christ's case and must be so with us.

2. "EN"

For Christ, en represented a spiritual position in which He abode.

This spiritual position is suggested in passages, such as the following:

"The Son... who is (not was) in heaven." (John 3:13)

"I am in the Father." (John 14:10)

It must, of course, be recognized that this relationship was the work of the Holy Spirit. From the time of the Spirit's lighting upon Him at the Jordan, all the movements were by the Spirit; even the Cross was wrought out "through the eternal Spirit." He abode in God, and on the side of His humanity this was maintained by the Spirit. There were suggestions, temptations, opportunities, possibilities, methods, means, ideas,

provocations, emotions, sentiments, and all the activities of intellect, soul, body, but it was His way to hold these in the Divine Spirit and not to act or proceed upon them as such. He would not commit Himself to any of them or to any man save as He had the Spirit's witness that the urge to do so proceeded from God. Thus He was saved the remorse, confusion, disappointment, shame, failure, and chaos, which always follow upon the uprising of the "natural (soulish, Gk.) man" into the spiritual world. Thus, having been anointed by the Spirit, He abode in God and refused to be drawn out. This is everything in the matter of fullness of life and effectiveness of service.

3. "SUN"

We shall not attempt in this brief treatise to deal in any detail with the particular significance of this preposition. It relates in a special way to the corporate character of the Body of Christ. Its importance is immense, but this is not the place for embarking on so large a theme. We merely remark here that its use emphasizes the fact that in the thought of God those who are

"born from above" are not merely so many individuals but are related to one another as the members of a body. They are "together" with one another and

"together" with Christ as Head of the one Body, and were so regarded by God in every phase of Christ's redemptive work. The words of Psa. 139:15,16

express this mystery. The practical outworking of this truth is dealt with in greater detail elsewhere.

The general ground of "in Christ" has been presented, but we must emphasize this essential counterpart of Christ's life. As the Father is the Head of the Son, so the Son is the Head of the Body; and as He abode in the Father, so He declares that we must abide in Him. We must not be led to act upon anything from within our natural lives, or anything from without as acting upon us, until we have judged it in the spirit. This applies especially to religious matters, for it is in this realm that we may make the greatest mistakes. The response of our natural emotions, or reasoning

powers, or will, to the impact of some suggestion may lead to much evil. The danger of much evangelistic work, spiritual teaching, and missionary propaganda is in its tendency to stir the emotions and offer spiritual prizes, instead of bringing the imperative note of Christ and the apostles.

Many a decision has been made under these conditions, which has proved incapable of taking the inevitable strain of testing and to be something less than a real work of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps there never was a time when there was more of what is called

"Christian service," when there was as much organization, machinery, advertisement, expenditure of time, energy, and means in "Christian" enterprise, or when there were more people interested; but it is doubtful whether - speaking comparatively - there ever was as little real spiritual effectiveness. The root question is, how much of all this proceeds directly by revelation and initiation from God by the Eternal Spirit? Of how much may it be truly said that it came by revelation of the Holy Spirit, or that "the Holy Ghost said," or that "it seemed good unto the Holy Ghost"? On the other hand, how much of it is the product of human discussion, devising, impulse, enthusiasm, imaginativeness, philanthropy, interest in a good cause, etc.?

The measure of the identification of the instrument with Christ in corporate union is the measure of the real work of God accomplished through it. There may be much which looks like success and impresses with a sense of real accomplishment, but when "the fire" has done its work it may be found that the real as against the apparent is very small. In the long run "the flesh profiteth NOTHING," though it may seem to get results. It is not what is done for God, but what is done by God that will last. Ours it is to see that we are utterly in Christ, and living by the Spirit. All the rest will be spontaneous. There can be no abiding until there has been a real incorporation, and this brings us to where we can proceed to show how this union is effected.

CHAPTER TWO

IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS DEATH

It has often been pointed out that the death of Christ had, and has, a twofold aspect. Firstly, there is the substitutionary, which is unique, isolated, and conclusive. Nothing can be added to that, nor can it be shared in its vicarious and redeeming efficacy. We receive the benefit of it as a gift by faith and are justified.

But there is a second aspect, namely, the representative. In this, we ourselves in the nature of Adam, in his fallen state, are included. Our sin is dealt with in the substitutionary aspect, ourselves are dealt with in the representative. While both of these are vitally and fundamentally related to our salvation, the latter will find the Divine emphasis when we come to living the Christ-life and fulfilling the Christ-purpose.

The Old Testament is full of this latter emphasis in type and teaching. Abraham must needs be separated from "country" (the world), "kindred" (natural relationships), and "father's house." (the "old man") As one writer has pointed out, his whole life was a constant application of the death-principle to the many phases of the natural man. He made an initial move when he came out of the land of the Chaldeans, but his progress was arrested at Haran until his father was dead. The "old man" cannot be taken beyond the Jordan (the Cross). The old life cannot come into the borders of the "heavenly places." The writer quoted points out the meaning of the many relationships and incidents in Abraham's life in their carnal nature, and of the trouble, arrest, and tragedy which they brought; and further, how they had to be cut off and abandoned. Some of these were:

1. Egypt - the realm of the senses; the attempt to find spiritual strength and enablement through the tangible, apparent, and present.
2. Lot - "the upright-natural mind." "The spiritual and natural mind seem at first so united that it is difficult to distinguish between them. The difference between the spiritual and the upright-natural mind is seen in the whole course and conduct of Abraham and Lot." It was only after Lot was

separated from him that the Lord said to Abraham "Lift up now thine eyes."

3. The Canaanites - false religion; spiritual, but satanic; outward rites with accompanying signs and wonders, but demoniacal.

4. Hagar and Ishmael - expediency; trying to obtain spiritual ends in a natural way; trying to be fruitful, and that through self-effort, fleshly means, on natural grounds.

The principle can be followed in other details of his life, but we are content to point it out and leave it.

Abraham, in order to come within the terms and fruitfulness of an eternal covenant, must be a man of the Spirit, a spiritual man, and this on a basis of faith.

In like manner Moses had to be disciplined and prepared. One of the most remarkable and - to many - most perplexing statements in Scripture is that in Exod. 4:24: "The Lord met him, and sought to kill him"; and this, after the vision and the commission.

We know that it was in relation to the covenant-sign of circumcision, but we must remember that circumcision was the symbol of the cutting off of the whole body of the flesh, and this is related to our identification with Christ in death. (Col. 2:11,12) Forty years earlier, Moses, with a conception of Divine service, had attempted it with carnal means and in his own natural life. This had brought the inevitable failure and arrest. For a further forty years the principle of death had to be applied, until the only honest expression in relation to spiritual service was "I cannot." The Lord had deliberately taken pains to bring him to nothing. The basic truth, however, must take some literal form of recognized testimony, there must be a definite expression of a spiritual fact - if you like, an ordinance; but the ordinance is nothing in itself, only as a confession of the acceptance of the spiritual reality. Circumcision was this in Israel, the encircling of blood, separating between the natural man and the spiritual, the old and the new; hence the incident mentioned. The progress of Moses was suddenly arrested, and with a shock he was brought up against the need to make in an act a definite and concrete declaration of the law of encompassment of

the end of the flesh. We may take it that if we essay to carry the uncircumcised flesh, or the natural man, into the realm of spiritual life or service we shall be smitten down - that natural man will be met with the challenge of the judgment of Calvary.

Thus we see how the truth of incorporation into the representative death of Christ lies at the root of Old Testament experience, and this can be traced right through the Scriptures. The history of Israel is one long commentary upon it. The Red Sea is the substitutionary death, the wilderness the revelation of the need for the Jordan as the representative death, or identification in the death.

Having come to the blessings of the substitutionary work of Christ, and the enjoyment of justification by faith, we shall - if our spiritual life is a pure and progressive one - begin to learn how very wide is the gap between the old creation and the new, between the natural man and the spiritual. This will come to us only progressively and line upon line, but with God it is already a settled conclusion. With Him there is no overlapping of the two, they are poles asunder. The bringing of these two together is to Him in the nature of spiritual fornication and the fruits of life and service are unlawful.

It is His purpose to make this increasingly clear to us, and while to us there may seem to be much mixture and intertwining, He will show us with ever increasing clearness that He has driven the dimensions of the eternal Cross between the two. We have given much Scripture in previous chapters, which shows the fundamental differences between these two, the natural and the spiritual.

To be a Christian is not just to change the direction of our interests - to turn all our faculties, abilities, energies, resources, emotions, acumen, enthusiasms, etc., over from self or the world to the account of Christianity, religion, the gospel or the kingdom of God.

In the realm of the life and things of God there are two words uttered over the natural man by God, "Nothing" and "Cannot." To fail to recognize the significance of these two words is to come into the hopeless, heart-breaking, barren realm of Rom. 7. Fruitless struggle will result if there be any genuine spiritual aspiration; and whether there be such or not (the

notion in the latter event being merely that of the natural man directed toward Christian enterprise) the service will be ineffective in all true spiritual attainment. No flesh shall glory in His presence, and the religious flesh is no more acceptable than the irreligious. How many there are who are seeking either to attain unto a standard of spiritual satisfaction, or to do God's service, with their own resources of intellect, will, emotion - reason, energy, passion. Hence all the unapostolic organization, machinery, advertisement.

No! For acceptance and service there must be a new man, and this new man has a new life, a new mind, a new spirit, a new way, a new capacity, a new consciousness, in fact "all things are become new." The one concerned comes more and more to realize how differently God does things from the way men do them; yes, and what different things God does. The aims of God, the methods of God, the means used by God, the times of God, are an education and often a discipline to this man in Christ. Until the "old man" is well crucified, God's ways and means and times and aims are a sore trial to him and he will either revolt and break away in himself or he will go down into the depths; but he will come anyway to see that in the intention of God, he - the natural man - must go to the Cross, where God put him conclusively in the representative man Jesus, the Christ. The touch of the natural man upon the things of the Spirit is death and desolation; hence the Lord is always taking precautions against this natural life in His own children and passing them through that which brings them very low and puts them, on their natural side, out of action. He drove a stake through Paul's flesh as a precaution against the uprising of his soulish life into exaltation; in order, further, that there might be no arrest, but rather an increase of spiritual usefulness. We have a very limited knowledge of our own natural springs - the motives, the nature of our desires, even for spiritual blessing; the personal interests in the kingdom of God; the craving to possess, to be satisfied, to have influence, recognition, freedom; and a multitude of other constitutional elements. The Lord knows how all our sources of life and expression are poisoned and tainted. He would not have us introspective and self-analyzing, but He would tell us His own verdict upon the "natural man," and ask us to accept the Divine requirements that he should be crucified. When, by faith in His judgment and word, we thus accept the Cross, He proceeds to work out the death in us, and we have a growing realization of the need for such. Then

we refuse to move other than in the Spirit on the ground of God's fact in Christ - "I have been crucified with Christ... it is no longer I" (Gal. 2:20). As the holy anointing oil was not to come upon man's flesh in the typical anointing in the Old Testament, so the Holy Spirit, typified there, will never be allowed to come upon uncrucified flesh in this age of the Spirit. Calvary precedes Pentecost in history and in experience. A true revelation of the worthlessness of the natural man in God's sight has always been a necessary prelude to anointing for service. The "I cannot" of Moses, the "Woe is me" of Isaiah, the "I am but a child" of Jeremiah, the "I am a sinful man" of Peter, the "In me... dwelleth no good thing" of Paul, are typical of all who have been the called of God, and these expressions are the result of the application of the true meaning of the Cross. And yet they were religious enthusiasts, and devoted to God in the realm of their soulish nature. It is ever the love of God which leads by the way of Calvary, though bitter may be the cup when the soul (not the spirit) is poured out unto death, for only so can there be that life of emancipation from the limitations of the natural into the universal dimensions of the spiritual.

Let us look into the Word again and keep this thought before us, and as we see that His death is our death let us say "Amen: Lord, work it out"; and then we shall be ready to "know him, and the power of his resurrection... becoming conformed unto his death."

CHAPTER THREE

IN THE LIKENESS OF HIS RESURRECTION

"That in my dying flesh the life whereby Jesus conquered death might show forth its power." (2 Cor. 4:11 - Conybeare)

Let it be immediately understood that, while resurrection as a whole may be here mentioned and ranged, it is not the future resurrection of the body but the immediate SPIRITUAL significance to the believer that particularly governs our consideration. The range is very great, but we shall deliberately seek to keep within the strict limits of essential and practical truth, using such wider Scriptural illustrations as will seem most helpful and enforcing. We feel that God would have us put as concise and definite a basis for prayer and spiritual enquiry as possible into the hands of His people, and not extend to a treatise. Time is short, duties are many and pressing, problems are acute, and spiritual "helps" are few in the realm of Christian life and service. Hence our need is to have vital basic principles emphasized as finger-posts to effectiveness and victory.

It is all-important that, at the outset, we should recognize what a great scope and tremendous emphasis the subject of resurrection has in the Word of God. As a principle it is patent or latent, according to the measure of our discernment, from the beginning to the end of the Divine revelation of Scripture. Undoubtedly, all things, which are of God have their new beginning and vital value since "the fall" in and by the representative and inclusive resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Note how much is wrapped up with the Divine attestation of His Sonship at resurrection. Note the specific attestation itself. Not at His birth nor at His death, not at Bethlehem nor at Calvary, is this special declaration from heaven made - the thing is true there, we know - but the attestation is reserved for resurrection. "Declared to be (marked out as) the Son of God with (in) power... by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. 1:4) Psalm 2 prefigures the counsel of malignity against the Lord's Anointed. This counsel is put into action to its utmost limit; He is slain. The ultimate issue is the heritage

of the nations; the immediate issue in resurrection is a decree. (verse 7) "Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee." He is the representative "firstborn from the dead" of a specific and peculiar kind of sonship.

To this very passage the company of believers in the presence of a further counsel of malignity made their appeal (Acts 4:25) and received at once a further Divine acknowledgment; the place was shaken, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and there were other triumphant issues. Similarly an effectual testimony was born at Antioch of Pisidia with this very passage at the center of that preached (Acts 13:33), clearly relating the Divine announcement to the resurrection. Then again, this particular transcendence of Christ's Sonship above angels and all else has this very passage quoted as its basis in Heb. 1:5. We shall see later that this is related to the inclusive dominion in the universe of the race in Christ, and also to the dethronement of the "lord of death." (Heb. 2:5-15)

Now this has been said simply in order to signify where the finger of God makes its emphatic seal, and how God is jealous for a testimony to the resurrection of Christ. We are then able to draw attention to a very vital principle in Christian experience as coming out of the Divine truth. Have you ever noticed that even that which had, and has, its origin in God, which comes forth from God, which is brought about by a supernatural act of God, has to pass into death in order that by resurrection it may have its supreme Divine seal and attestation?

The Old Testament is full of types of this truth. Reflect upon Isaac alone. He was brought into the world by a miracle. There was no natural ground upon which to account for him. (See Rom. 4:19.) Yet he must die, and (as is said of Abraham's body) he was "as good as dead" when the knife was lifted; but for all time, resurrection is the point of Divine emphasis in this story, especially in the vindication of Abraham's faith. Isaac was a type of Christ and, as we have said, although Christ was a miracle in His birth and truly the Son of God incarnate, yet the death prepares the way for a superlative testimony from heaven. Without tracing this principle (which you may do for yourself) so far as the Word is concerned, let us note its application in experience as to ourselves. We are born of God, and are sons in the Son by right of our birth from above; but how true it is that the course of our spiritual experience seems to be deeper and ever deeper

baptisms in death - His death - in order that more and more of the power of His resurrection may be known by us and manifested in us. There seem to be cycles, or tides, of death and life, and while each cycle or tide seems to compass our end more completely or to leave us at lower ebb than ever, there comes with ever-increasing fullness an uprising of spiritual life and knowledge and power. Thus while the death destroys "the old man," we live increasingly by that life, "the new man," which is not human but Divine, and upon which - and upon which alone - the seal of God rests. This is a deliberate course taken by God with us.

See it further in service and work. Is it not true that most, if not all, of the pieces of work raised up by God to fulfill some ministry in His eternal purpose have firstly had every evidence of being God-born, but later have gone down into a time of deep and awful death, seeming disintegration, break-up, loss, until it seemed that nothing would remain? Sometimes this has been by persecution, massacre, and that counsel of malignity; sometimes by a series of what we humanly call catastrophies, tragedies, misfortunes. Sometimes the causes are not apparent; they are inside, like some evil thing sapping the very vitals. Sometimes, again, it is an inexplicable arrest and pressure, a paralysis and a deadlock, and it is difficult to know whether it is from within or from without. All we know is that death reigns, or appears so to do. Place this rule alongside of some of the great missions for work abroad or at home, and see how truly it applies. What is true in the greater is also true in the smaller - a local fellowship, a Bible or Sunday-school class, or some other piece of work. Provided always that the initiation of the work was of Him, that we were put into it by Him, and that it has been kept on such lines as are consistent with His mind and purpose, such an experience of death is not an argument that the Lord is not in it, but may be regarded as evidence of His concern to put the work ever more fully where His highest attestation can be given.

The principle holds good in the matter of received truth. The Lord may reveal to us truth which is of great importance and which is intended to be tremendously fruitful in life and ministry. It comes with the power of a revelation, and for a while we rejoice in its light, talk about nothing else, and find that it works. Then something happens. Whatever that may be, the result is that we go down to death with and because of that truth. For the time it seems to have lost its potency, and all hope that we shall be saved is

abandoned. We wonder if we shall ever be able honestly to believe that again, much less preach it. But at length, by a touch of life which leaves us as those who dream (Ps. 126:1) and in spite of all our past fears, that very truth is our chief emphasis, but now with a solemnity and reality not known before. Moreover the Lord is making its ministry a power to others which is quite new and previously unknown. So in all this He seems to get more for Himself by resurrection than He did by birth. This may seem largely a mystery, but it is evident and true to experience. There are other directions in which this applies, one of which we might mention. It is that of relationships. How frequently have we come up against this perplexing experience. Between those related - sometimes in the deepest bonds - for some reason, often quite without any natural ground, there has come the severest strain. It appears that the old ground of fellowship is entirely breaking down and being lost. It may be by reason of some spiritual crisis in the life of one of those affected, some call to service or to go a little farther with the Lord, or some test of faith or loyalty to God. Whatever may be the cause, seen or unseen, such an experience is not uncommon. The first issue is an end of the kind or level of fellowship that has been. It would sometimes appear that the whole thing has broken down and gone forever. At such a time serious questionings arise as to the apparent antagonism between a conceived idea of what God requires and what looks manifestly to be plain, common duty to others.

This is a bitter and harrowing time to the soul-life. The ultimate issue - if there has been a definite willingness to suffer the loss of all for His sake, and a holding on to God though blindly and with much weakness - is that the whole thing is brought back again, but yet not the same. "That which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be," (1 Cor. 15:37): it is the same yet different. It is on a higher plane; a purer, holier, stronger, deeper thing, and capable of much greater spiritual fruitfulness. In a word, in the grave it has shed much of the human and in the resurrection it has become much more Divine. The elements, which are temporal and natural, have been supplanted by more of the spiritual and eternal.

Having given this space to stating and illustrating a fact, and enunciating or disclosing an abiding law, we must now say something about the nature of resurrection.

What is resurrection? It is the power of ascendancy over death. What is the central factor in resurrection? It is a life, which cannot know death, a life, which is indestructible. Such is the nature of the resurrection to which we are giving our attention. There is a resurrection, which is but the re-animation of the body for a time or for a judgment. That is not our subject. We are speaking of the resurrection of Christ and our incorporation there into.

By our new birth from above we become partakers of the life of God. That which the Scripture in our versions call "eternal life" is the unique possession of the born-again; no man by nature has it. The whole course of true spiritual experience is for the increase and development of that life, and this particularly takes place, as we have seen, through crises and cycles of death and resurrection. What is the Lord's supreme aim with His children? It is undoubtedly to get them to live by His life only. To this end He will more and more take away their own life.

As the time of the Church's translation becomes more imminent, this truth will have an increased emphasis, so that to live victoriously at all, or work effectively, there will need to be a great drawing upon the Lord for His life. When the saints are translated that they shall not see death, and when that great shout of victory over death and the grave goes up (1 Cor. 15:54,55) it will not be by some outside, external operation of Divine power alone, but it will be the triumph of the resurrection life within the Body of Christ expressing itself in that final glorious consummation of a process of ascendancy which has been going on since the time when life was received at new birth by faith in the risen Lord. This is a most important truth to recognize, for it explains everything. Why must we know weakness, impotence, worthlessness, nothingness, on the side of our natural life? Emphatically, that His strength may be "made perfect (or be perfected) in weakness." And what is His strength? "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to that working of the strength of his might which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." (Eph. 1:19, 20) It is resurrection might and life. The more spiritual a believer becomes, the more he will realize his dependence upon the life of God for all things. This will be true physically as in every other way.

The central principle of any "Divine healing" which is in truth of God and to spiritual purpose is Rom. 8:11, an energizing of the mortal body with resurrection life. This does not of necessity inevitably or invariably carry with it complete physical healing, but it does mean such a quickening as to make for a transcendence of the weakness or infirmity which prevents a fulfillment of the will of God in life or service. It means an accession of Divine life in our spirit so that we are enabled to do much more than is humanly or naturally possible. This life cannot be taken hold of and used by the flesh. Immediately there is a dropping down on to a natural level by one who has been led into a life of faith, there will be a recrudescence of death. An atmosphere charged with the life of God is always a place of renewal, refreshing, and strengthening to him that is spiritual.

If Enoch was a type of the believers who will be translated that they shall not see death, then we must remember that "by FAITH Enoch was translated." What is the nature of this faith? It is the faith, which depends upon Divine life for all things, and is therefore an abiding witness and testimony to the resurrection of Christ. Hence, as the Lord's coming draws near, we shall be forced to live exclusively by His life - "the life whereby Jesus conquered death." This is the life by which God's people have triumphed in all ages. A close study of the Old Testament will reveal that it was faith in resurrection life which brought the Divine vindication. "That they might obtain a better resurrection" was the motive which made them victorious in death and therefore over the authority of death. The ascendancy of spirit so markedly characteristic of New Testament believers is to be accounted for on the ground of a life within their spirit which could not see death, the life of Him Who "dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him," for "it was impossible that he should be holden of death."

Now it is important to remember that death is not only a law or a principle. It is that; but the Scriptures constantly make clear that behind the thing there is a person. Just as in giving eternal life the Lord gives Himself - for, said He, "I am the resurrection and the life" and it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" - so back of death is he "that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Conybeare translates that "the lord of death."

The great battle of Egypt which issued in the establishing of that which for

all Old Testament times was pointed to as the classic illustration of the exercise of supreme Divine power, was not originally between Jehovah on the one hand and Pharaoh or the Egyptians on the other. The latter were involved, and were ultimately destroyed because in the presence of Divine revelation and manifestation they persisted in rebellion. The real battle was between Jehovah and "all the gods of Egypt" (Ex. 12:12), which gods were but the spiritual hierarchy of him who had ever made it his aim to be "like the Most High," and had assumed the role of "the god of this world." A right understanding of that story would make very clear that it was a conflict between the Lord of Life and the lord of death, and the Hebrews were only translated out of the kingdom of darkness and the authority of death because a lamb had shed its blood, and through death had figuratively destroyed him that had the power of death. That is the background of Calvary.

In His Cross Christ drew on Himself the whole hierarchy of evil, and went down under it to the bottom-most reach of its domain, and then, by reason of the life which could not be holden of death, He stripped off principalities and powers, broke through, and rose their conqueror, and in resurrection far above all rule and authority was the firstborn from the dead - the first and inclusive One of all who should be identified with Him. The final triumph of His Body will be the consummation of Rev. 12:11 - victory over the system and its power by reason of the life of the risen Lord indwelling. If it be true that this is progressive, then it is the power of Satan as "the prince of this world" which is being broken by the life of Christ increasing within us; or to put it in a more useful way, the power of Satan can only be destroyed as we, through death, know Christ in the power of His resurrection and receive His risen life more and more.

In conclusion, let us point out that after His resurrection our Lord was, because of the peculiar nature of His resurrection state, no longer subject to natural limitations. Time and space had no more control of Him. The principle abides and applies now. When there is a living in the values and energy of resurrection life we are children of eternity and of the universe. Prayer touches the ends of the earth, and the significance of our being and doing is of universal and eternal dimensions; there are no limitations.

So then, beloved of God, the natural life is no longer a criterion; whether it

be strong or weak it matters not. Its strength does not mean effectiveness in spiritual things, whether that strength be intellectual, moral, circumstantial, social, physical. Its weakness does not carry a handicap. We are called to live and serve only in His life, and it is the only efficiency, but the sure one. Then we must try to keep in mind that the Lord's purpose, in all that seems to be destructive of us, is to get us upon this plane, which is in every sense supernatural.

Further, we must see to it that all the means whereby this life can be strengthened and increased are used to the full, and a clear discernment of the Body of Christ is of supreme account. This life is the life of the whole corporate Body, and the individual member can only have it in relation thereto. This subject is dealt with more fully elsewhere, but here it must be the closing word because we are dealing with incorporation into Christ, and this is Christ in His fullness as the Head; but not alone as Head, but as one Body. What is true of the Head must be true of the members. What is true of the Vine must be true of the branches. What is true of the Last Adam must be true of every member of His race. "Planted together in the likeness of his resurrection" said the Apostle (Rom. 6:5), and he prayed that it might be more and more experimental - "that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection..." (Phil. 3:10)

This is truly the prayer of the Holy Spirit in the servant of Christ seeking to make real the great truth of John 5:21, 25, 26 -

"The hour... now is."

"The hour cometh."

CHAPTER FOUR

ASCENSION AND GLORY

While much emphasis is laid upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, it is not generally realized that His ascension is no less important as a truth basic to our life in Him and for His universal purpose. In the fuller unveilings of spiritual life in Christ which came progressively through the anointing of the Holy Spirit much is said, on the one hand, about our having been made to sit in the heavenlies in Christ, and, on the other hand, we are reminded that we are strangers and pilgrims here. This revelation interprets the whole Bible along a certain line, and the key-declaration to this sweep of the Word is that the seat and base of all life and work, the place of the pattern, purpose, and entire resource of our calling in Christ, is in the heavens.

There are two words, which represent or signify two halves of one great truth - ascension and translation; these are complementary to each other. The one makes possible the other, and the other demands the one. Ascension is an act, conclusive and definite. Translation is a process culminating in a climax. When the Lord Jesus ascended up on high and was "received up" it was representative and relative, just as was His death and resurrection. As the representative of the many sons whom He would bring to glory, He immediately and definitely transferred from earth to heaven the source of spiritual life, the spring of spiritual being; and in fact everything that pertains unto salvation, sanctification, service, glory, is now in the heavens, and cannot be found in the earth.

From the point of being "born from above," everything implied and involved in both nature and purpose is out from above. An exquisite cameo of this is found in the eighty-seventh Psalm. The terms are typical or illustrative. Here the partiality of God is seen for the spiritual as against the carnal habitations. Then the things of glory are related to this spiritual city. Then the boasted nativities of men are reviewed: they boast in having been born in Egypt, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, or Cush. But transcending all boasts is His whose citizenship is of Zion and upon whom Zion's franchise has been conferred.

The Lamb's book of life looms into view, and the names are mentioned, and the all-inclusive realization of these heavenly citizens is that all their fountains are there. Theirs is a heavenly calling, life, vision, citizenship, walk, hope, country, kingdom, etc. One of the most marked things in the pre-ascension experiences of God's people is the failure of anything of this earth - though given of God - to satisfy the vision and expectation of His truly spiritually minded people. Abraham had promise of a country and a city; he moved out with God, but it is quite clear that as his faith expanded, the fullest possibilities of realization on the earth failed to fulfill his hope and the promise. He came into the land but he was not at all satisfied that the promise was fulfilled; in fact, though there was blessing and increase he grew less satisfied. The truth is that his spiritual life was expanding and with it his faith demanded something more than that which was of the earth. That to which he looked forward at first, as adequate to meet the expectation through promise, he came by closer fellowship with God to regard as altogether insufficient. This led him to a series of refusals and rejections of things of earthly glory. The Promised Land ultimately ceased to be for him a thing of earth, and so writers under the illumination of the same Spirit as was leading Abraham tell us that he looked for "a better country... a heavenly," and "a city... whose builder (architect) and maker is God." (Heb. 11:16, 10) Placing over against this such passages as Matt. 3:9, John 8:56, Gal. 3:7, 4:26, Heb. 12:22, we are surely compelled to recognize that Abraham's vision became more and more "otherworldly" as his faith became clearer. Simultaneously with this throwing back of the horizon, and as a means to that end, everything of earth was taken down into death, to pass through and out on to resurrection ground by resurrection life. It was then a thing no longer of this earth but of the heavens. This applied to possessions, relationships, prospects, vision, promise, faith, service, capacity.

An important principle is here revealed as basic to all the accomplishments of God and to all effective life and service in fellowship with God. WE MUST

COME INTO EVERY DIVINE THING AS OUT FROM ABOVE, AND NOT

FROM THE EARTH LEVEL.

Such phrases as "taking up Christian work," "getting into Christian service," contain a very dangerous and false concept. Unless such would-be workers have had their own works (even for God) brought to death, and themselves also, any move into things which are related to God will result in one of three things - to be smashed by them, or to come sooner or later to deadlock as in a cul-de-sac, or to go on with a show and appearance of success, but really effecting nothing in any heavenly sense, the thing effected being of this world, though religious and well meant.

Moses undoubtedly had a heavenly revelation in Egypt. By illumination of spirit he saw that the poor, oppressed, crushed, distracted mob of Semites were the elect of God. (Heb. 11:25) He further saw that the Cross as the reproach of Christ was the method of redemption. (verse 26) Then he saw that sin, in his case, would be to retain the pleasurable advantages of this world in denial of that Cross and its objective. In the light of this he made his decision; he refused, he chose, he forsook, and feared not. But even when he had arrived at the position in his spirit, he had to learn the main lesson of his life, namely, that heavenly visions require heavenly instruments for their realization. He essayed to put his revelation into effect from the standpoint of some natural or earthly vantage ground. This jeopardized everything, brought confusion, delay, shame, and fear. He had to go out and be brought through discipline to his famous "I cannot," and then come into the situation as from above. The real effect was to have been taken out and up, and then to come down on to it as from above; for afterward Moses was a man linked with the throne of God. It has ever been thus. For patterns, commissions, and powers, a place of ascendancy has been the Divine method. In "the patterns of things in the heavens" a mountain will do, but for the actual things a spiritual union with the ascended Lord is essential.

This can be traced in the case of Moses, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Paul, and others.

"Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me... (Ezek. 11:1, etc.) is a clause which implies the Divine order. This is not the elevation of the soul by imaginations, ecstasies, idealism, or mental visions. Such, as well as false or true presentations of great prospects, may be presented by the Devil. The Master refused the elevations and visions given by the enemy

because the true prospect was only by the way of the Cross.

Paul called himself "a wise master-builder," but this in his actual language only meant one who had been allowed to look at the architect's plan and was working according to it. For this look he had been "caught up," but to be "in the Spirit" is always to be caught up. The Lord Jesus said much about being in heaven while on earth. "The Son of man who is in heaven." (John 3:13)

"What he (the Son) seeth the Father doing... these the Son also doeth in like manner." (John 5:19) His spirit had a heavenly union by the Holy Spirit, and so He wrought. It is one thing to take even the Bible as a manual or textbook - a system of truth, teaching, practice, and order; it is quite another thing to see the eternal, spiritual principles behind the precepts, practices, and system. The one is to live and work according to the transmission of truth through the medium of human intelligence: that is, an infinite truth has been shaped in finite terms to make it intelligible to men. The other is to apprehend by a quickened and renewed spirit the infinite significance of the revelation. The transmission represents the human range, the spiritual revelation infinitely transcends this, and requires a heavenly mind - the mind of the Spirit as against the mind of the flesh.

Only such as have been made one with the ascended Christ have His mind and can effectively serve Him. In so many ways the fact, nature, and need of ascension-union with Christ are emphasized in the whole Bible and especially in the New Testament. He ascended with the keys of authority in His possession. As man and for man He had wrested the dominion from the prince of this world. As a mighty conqueror He was "received up." This victorious return was foreshadowed in the spirit of the Psalmist when he sang:

"Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: and the King of glory will come in... The Lord mighty in battle..." (Psa. 24:7, 8)

If it is true that Christ has taken our humanity, redeemed, purged, sanctified, into the very throne of God, and is reproducing this corporate union of Himself with us and of ourselves with Himself in the Church

which is His Body, then ascension union means that we now have a place in the place of His sovereignty: we are to have dominion in Him over principalities and powers. The safer way to state this is that His sovereignty functions - or is meant to function - through His Body and all its members.

There are other doors mentioned in this connection besides the "everlasting doors." There are the "gates of Hades," which mean the counsels and schemes and judgments of hell. These are represented as being against the Church. It is therefore said that, because of the heavenly union with and in Him Who has passed triumphantly through the everlasting doors, these other

"gates" shall not prevail, because His sovereignty is in the Church and the Church is in His sovereignty. Not to a Jewish group as such, or to the nucleus of an earthly kingdom related to any one age, but to the nucleus of His Church He addressed those words about the building of that Church and its ascendancy over the counsels of hell (Matt. 16:18). To them as such He also said, "Behold I have given you authority... over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19); this, in the light of His Cross, which was the abiding background of all His utterances and actions. There can be no resting of the Holy Spirit in and upon believers except as incorporation in Christ crucified, buried, risen, and ascended has taken place. For Elisha to receive the "double portion" of his master's spirit he must pass through Jordan with him and be with him in the place of ascension.

It is ever thus. The Holy Spirit mediates the sovereignty of the Head to and through the Body, and for this "holding fast the Head" heavenly union is essential. The Church is a heavenly body, not an earthly society, institution, organization. The ecclesiastical systems of this world, which call themselves

"the Church" and "the churches" are too often a grotesque caricature. There are no sects, denominations, "branches of the Church," with God. Only one Church exists in the mind and interest of God, and that "the church of the firstborn," and all this other welter is because there has been an attempt made again and again to set up something for God on this earth as of the earth. God is not in this, but is leaving it to compass its own end

in confusion, or proceed apace in its delusion. He is quietly, without sound of axe or hammer, putting His elect stones into a spiritual temple, a heavenly house. Only such as have the vantage ground of the heavenly places will see this, discountenance the false, and find full blessedness in doing what the Father is doing.

We now proceed to say a little about that half of this truth implied in the word

"translation." At the outset we said that "translation is a process culminating in a climax." The climax is, of course, the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The whole course of Christian experience when wrought out by God is one of progressive transition or translation from earthlies to heavenlies. Faith is the principle of translation, and its very nature demands a basis which is spiritual and not of the senses, which is heavenly and not of the earth. The Lord's dealings with His people have ever resulted in their losing all earthly ground of confidence and assurance and being made utterly dependent upon Himself.

Faith always brings us into precarious and difficult situations. Faith always demands a letting go of things seen and temporal. Faith threatens, and carries out its threat, to bewilder and confound our natural judgments, wisdom, acumen, hope, confidence, and security. Faith never fails to cut the ties of our natural safety, and dry up the springs of our human resource. All this must be in order to open up an entire system of heavenly fullness. God makes revelation indispensable and His own heavenly realities absolutely essential to existence. Thus He meets us in some challenge and demand, a crisis is precipitated, a step in the obedience of faith is required, and when it is taken it is a step upward which gives us some spiritual vantage-ground where we see what we did not know before. Thus by a succession of upward steps in faith we are having the faith of God's elect wrought in us in preparation for that climax in translation. It is corporate faith in the whole Body of Christ - proving it to be what it really is, a heavenly Body - that will bring about the advent of Christ. "The Second Coming of Christ," is not some merely historical event in a Divine timetable of prophecy. It is the climax of faith in the Body of Christ, which faith has severed that Body absolutely from the world and merely earthly things, even though they be religious things and systems. The obedience of

faith increases capacity for apprehending the spiritual, eternal, and unseen principles of God's eternal purpose, and thus makes possible the effecting of that purpose. Surely this is the principle running through Hebrews 11 as a summary of the nature and course of faith. But it is "one faith," even

"the faith of the Son of God." This faith is a mighty energy, spiritually militant, and the means by which the battles of the Lord have ever been fought. Thus it is that the final great conflict with the Satanic hierarchy will be brought to a victorious issue by the faith of the Christ triumphant in His Church (Rev. 12:11). Thus shall the sovereignty of the HEAVENS be established over the

"gates" (counsels) of hell by the Church, and the earth will feel the impact of that triumphant faith.

This kind of translation faith is rare and few there are who will pay its price. Well might the Lord ask if He shall find it on the earth at His coming. Let it be emphasized once more that the transferring of all things to the heavenlies, so that we are feeling more and more the strangeness of strangers and the homelessness of pilgrims here, and at-homeness in spiritual and heavenly things, is the natural course of a true life in God. When the climax comes and we are finally translated, it will be no great change for our inner man; there will be no awkwardness or feeling of being strange and out of place. It will be but the last phase of the spiritual journey where the glory breaks upon us, and like Enoch, "we are not, for God has taken us."

It only remains to be said that this is the path of, and to, the glory.

The glory is always heavenly glory. Ultimately it will be manifested in a perfected humanity. At present it is secretly within the spirit of the believer, and with each fresh step up in faith, that which cannot be defined to others becomes more wonderful to him. It would be a poor description of the Divine glory to say that it is incorruption and incorruptibleness, perfection of understanding, perfection of harmoniousness, perfection of capacity, perfection of graciousness. But almost imperceptibly the movement of faith and the action of grace are leading on to this. The incorruptible seed which makes possible the incorruptible body is already in the sons of God by faith. There is an opening of the eyes of their

understanding, and heavenly things for them are much more real than the things seen. There is a "peace which passeth understanding" realized in deep crises, which is the fruit of a harmony in the will with God's will. (The word "peace" would always be better translated

"harmony.") So also spiritual capacity is that which transcends the limitations of time and space, and which bounds the universe in effects and issues. And it scarcely need be said that the graciousness of Divine love, compassion, tenderness, considerateness, humility, etc., are the glory of God.

These things, however, do not touch all that His glory means. Perfection of character, capacity and service, bring perfection of satisfaction. This is but the basis of His glory. Here we have to stop short. This glory can only be known in spirit and not portrayed in words. We remind ourselves that it is written that we have been called "unto his eternal glory" (1 Pet. 5:10) and that our salvation is "with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2:10) and that the light affliction

"worketh... an exceeding weight of glory." (2 Cor. 4:17)

Thus, as we have been crucified together with Him, buried with Him, raised with Him, so we are ascended and glorified together with Him.

May we have grace that every movement of God by which He would make our ascension-union manifest and experimentally real may find an "Amen" in our hearts, cost what it may in the uprooting of our lives from earth.

He would have us see the heavens open always and the representative and inclusive "Son of man" in the glory AS US, even while we are on the earth; everything in ministry here moving from and to the heavens.

With these heavenly truths thus before us let us find the meaning and force of familiar exhortations, such as:

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth... but lay up... treasures in heaven." (Matt. 6:19, 20)

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above,

where Christ is... Set your minds on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth." (Col. 3:1, 2)

If we are to appear with Christ in glory we must have a life already hid with Christ in God, and ourselves be dead to things on the earth.

"For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:3)