

PLAIN TALK
ON
Life and Teaching
of Christ Jesus

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Chapter 1

Do you realize that God in providence prepared the world for the coming of Christ?

In studying the life and teachings of Christ Jesus I want to discuss what was involved in His coming in the fullness of time, as recounted in the following passage in Galatians 4:4, 5:

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

This was the marvelous announcement of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ which was presented to the whole wide world in the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. The Son of God was born of a virgin in Bethlehem in Judea but His ministry and His message were to the whole wide world. In order that all men might know the news of Jesus of Nazareth there needed to be communication from person to person. In those days word got around mainly by word of mouth, person to person. Mankind often erects barriers between people that prevent the free flow of ideas and people who live in one area often stay away from people who live in another area. But at the time that Christ was born the whole world was under the government of Rome who removed these local barriers which prevented local hostilities. Rome would not allow quarreling among the various people in the empire.

There was at that time what has been called "the Pax Romania," which is the Peace of Rome, when all men were controlled so that there would be no disturbances. In this condition of peace Rome imposed taxes upon the people of that day and trade was developed by traveling salesmen. All people spoke Greek, giving them a common medium for communication. All this was developed by secular practical circumstances. When we say they all talked the same language we have in mind they all understood the same language although local areas might have their own dialect.

The Jews, who travelled everywhere, had definite traditions and at that time they all would have held up to you Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (who became Israel), David and so on. Their leaders cherished prophecies from godly men of old. There was the Abrahamic Covenant, there was the Davidic Covenant and there was the new covenant promised in the prophets. And the Jews clung to certain ideas in their culture: they had concepts of sin, of righteousness, of judgment, of mercy. Everywhere the Jew went these ideas would be spread. In their national consciousness they held certain hopes: they expected a golden future.

The Kingdom of God was a concept, an idea, that was developed in the time of the captivity when the Jews were captives of Babylon. In those days the whole world was acquainted with the kingdom of Syria, the kingdom of Assyria, the kingdom of Babylon, the kingdom of the Persians, which appeared one after another to crush the kingdom of David, the governing house in Israel. But in the time of Daniel there emerged the concept of the Kingdom of Heaven – the Kingdom of God – because Daniel interpreted the experiences of Nebuchadnezzar to show that one day God would rule. And in his visions he saw the coming of the Messiah, the prince, who would come to rule over all.

Now the Kingdom of God, sometimes called the Kingdom of Heaven, meant that God would be in control and this concept stressed the sovereignty of God: He rules. It stressed the Covenant with Abraham: God would dwell with His people. It stressed the covenant with David: God would rule and produce order among mankind through the Son of David, the Messiah. And the future glory of the Jews would come to pass in the Messiah and that was promised to them. All of this was in the consciousness of the Jewish people as what they had in mind by the Kingdom of God.

The Messiah, which is the Hebrew name for Christ, was the chosen One of God and prophets told that one day the chosen One of God would be identified. He would be the righteous Servant; the righteous Branch; variously named and described in the Old Testament prophecies but always seen as the Victor over the Kingdoms of men. Daniel saw that unhewn stone coming out of heaven and falling on the image and smashing it and growing until it filled the whole earth. That was the figurative way in which Daniel foresaw the time when God would, through His Servant, the Messiah, rule so far as this world was concerned. The Messiah would bring to pass all of the promises of God, which Paul said are Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus.

In II Corinthians 1:20 we read, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." All the issues of time and eternity are involved in what He, the Messiah, did. He was not an angel from heaven; He was One from among the people and was sometimes called the Son of Man. He would triumph over all enemies and this is seen in the Scripture in the book of Revelation. This One would be King of Kings and Lord of all. He would rule over all. This was the idea the Jewish people had. The coming of the Messiah would take place following the coming of the forerunner. In those days when the king traveled overland there would be a forerunner who would go ahead to make sure the roads were passable and everything was in order. John the Baptist understood himself to be that way. In John 1:23, John the Baptist said it was given to him to "make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaiah."

We read in Isaiah 40:3-5, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord." (The Lord was coming as King of Kings and Lord of all.) "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God?" (Because this Messiah who was coming would actually be God Himself and we know He was the Son of God.) "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low" (the highway will be straightened out, the hills smoothed down, the valleys built up, everything on the level) "and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

That is the promise in Isaiah that John the Baptist said he came to fulfill. And thus we have set forth what was involved in the fullness of time. God has brought all these things together. Rome, as the central power, kept the whole known world of that time in peace. The Jews, wherever they went, had their unshaken and undiminished attitude toward God. They had in their minds the Kingdom of God: one day God would rule. And there were the kingdoms of men – Syria, Assyria, Babylon and the Persians. And over against the kingdoms of men the kingdom of David in the country of Israel and afterwards Israel and Judea could not withstand their pressure. They were overcome but one day God would reveal Himself from heaven and He would take charge. The Kingdom of God would be established through His chosen Servant, the Messiah. May the Lord help us to understand more and more of what a wonderful thing it was when the Son of God came into this world to bring to pass the will of God in the Gospel.

Chapter 2

Have you any idea what the virgin birth really means?

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus of Nazareth was born in Bethlehem. His mother's name was Mary. The circumstances surrounding His birth were very unusual. The story is simple, though it includes elements that are truly remarkable. This story of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ should never be told out of the context of Scripture, as the Word of God. Apart from the truth of God the story is incredible. Jesus of Nazareth was born physically, humanly, as any other human being but He was not as any other human being.

When we come to the story itself we note many unusual things. An angel announced His birth. Before His body was conceived in Mary an angel came to tell her that she would have a child before she had ever been with any man. Nobody else could have brought that message; this was someone from God. Angels were present the night He was born; they were out in the field with the shepherds and they surrounded Him. We get some idea about His own attitude with reference to His birth in Hebrews 10:5-7:

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body has thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure, Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.

These words are saying something like this: when Jesus of Nazareth came into this world as the incarnation of the Son of God, He was the Son of God Himself, He came to do the will of God. He did not come to bring something in His hands, like a sacrifice; He did not come to place something before God, like an offering. He came to give Himself. And this points to the heart of the truth in the Christian Gospel; we do not get right with God because of what we do: we cannot do enough. We do not get right with God and have His blessing because of what we have: we do not have enough. We receive the blessing of God when we yield ourselves into His will to do His will. There is something in Philippians 2:5-8 that we should take note of:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

This passage shows that the coming of Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God was a voluntary act on His part. It involved for Him a deliberate decision while He was with His Father. He emptied Himself of His glory and came into this world to do His Father's will. In some respects His coming was similar to what John tells is the case of a person being born again when we read these words in John 1:13, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

The story of the virgin birth is mentioned in only two of the four Gospels. Mark does not say anything about it and John does not say anything about it, but Matthew and Luke do. When we think about the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, each of the four Gospels give that a central place. And each of the four Gospels give the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ a central place. In his account Matthew, in the first and second chapters, tells how Joseph was prepared in a dream to accept the idea that this young woman to whom he was engaged to be married would give birth to a child from God. And in the second chapter of Matthew we read about how the wise men came from the east to worship Him because they had seen His star in the east. These things point into another world. In Joseph's dream an angel of God spoke to him and the wise men came because of the revelation they had received.

Luke tells how Mary was prepared: the angel Gabriel came and told her that she would have a child.

The supernatural features of the story are very important; they are essential to an understanding and any attempt by a natural person to try in various ways to reduce this or that element so as to make it appear to be natural is wrong. When I was professor at the Seminary teaching this in my classes, one of my students asked if I really believed this account. When I answered in the affirmative he then said, "You have a university degree and you probably took biology. I said, "Yes, and before I ever took a course in biology I knew all that you have in mind. What is your problem?" Whereupon he asked how it could be possible that this child would be born without a human father. I remember how I said to him, "Do you have any room on your chair to move over a little, because I want Mary to sit beside you." That is the question she asked Gabriel and she had not been to the university and studied biology, but she knew. She asked the angel, "How can this be?" And the angel told her that "with God nothing is impossible." I told that student when Mary asked Gabriel to explain it to her, Gabriel did not explain it and would it be all right if I just did not explain it to him. We all enjoyed that moment.

The coming of Jesus Christ was the incarnation of the Son of God, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us full of grace and truth." There are two aspects that make the virgin birth necessary: first, there is the pre-existence of the Son of God. Remember, He was eternally the Son of God and we read in Philippians 2:5-8 how the initiative is in the Son of God. ". . . being in the form of God . . . but made himself of no reputation." (That was His act; He emptied Himself.) "And took upon him the form of a servant." (He was not a servant but He took that form.) "And was made in the likeness of men."

Now Adam was made in the likeness of God but that did not make Adam God. And when the Son of God was made in the likeness of men, the outward form was like a man but He was always the Son of God. "And being found in fashion as a man" (that is the way He lived and He did it on purpose) "He humbled himself." At the time they came to arrest Him, Peter wanted to defend Him and He said, "Don't you realize that I could right now ask my Father and I could have twelve legions of angels?" Jesus of Nazareth did not have to endure any of the indignities heaped upon Him but He came to do His Father's will and that was, to yield. He could not be a child of Adam because He was the Son of God.

The second aspect to have in mind here is His sinless nature. If He had been born as a child of Adam, as you and I were, He would have been sinful by nature. But He was born a child of God. And when we have all these things in mind we can also keep in mind a general thought: the only place in the world you will ever read about the birth of Jesus Christ is in the Bible. And regardless of what interpretation we give it; there is no doubt in our mind at all as to what the Bible teaches.

When the Apostles' Creed was formulated, which undertook to set forth the teaching of the apostles in the early church, they said that "He was conceived of the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin." There is no doubt what the Bible teaches. The Lord Jesus Christ was actually in Himself the Son of God.

Chapter 3

Did you know the soul needs to be prepared to receive Jesus Christ?

"There was a man sent from God, whose name was John." It is common to speak of accepting Christ and an easy error follows. We tend to think that anyone can accept Christ at any time in any way. This may well be because we overlook what Christ came to do. He did not come to show us how to live so that anybody could start doing it; He came to save us from our doom. But the Gospel is not forced on anyone. Jesus Christ must be received by the willing soul. It is when the soul realizes it is doomed that it becomes willing to receive salvation. This realization comes when the soul is conscious of personal sin and of guilt and is repentant before God.

Now John the Baptist preached the law of God – the Ten Commandments, and all that is involved to induce repentance because there is no soul that sinneth not; however, many people hide their sins. And the Scriptures say that "whoso covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." The only way a person will ever confess and forsake his sins is when he knows about them. And the only way a person will ever know about them is when he faces the law of God.

John's father was a priest by the name of Zechariah and his mother's name was Elisabeth. She was a cousin of Mary of Bethlehem, the mother of Jesus of Nazareth. Zechariah and Elisabeth had no children and were now in old age. An angel told Zechariah that he would have a son from Elisabeth; Zechariah doubted the message and because of that he was struck dumb. We read in Luke 1:13-17, "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God." (That is, this child that would be born.) ". . . to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

In the last verse of chapter 1 we read, "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel." We read in Mark 1:6, "And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey." All of this indicates that this person John appeared to be like a country person: his clothing was the clothing like that of the country people and his diet was the diet of the country folks. By the time he was thirty years of age John was already well known and when he preached out in the open areas outside the city we read that all Jerusalem went out to hear him. His message was simple, "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand," and "Repent and believe the Gospel."

In the days of John the Baptist it was the practice of the children of Israel to offer sacrifice for sin. This was never changed until after Christ Jesus died on Calvary's cross. In John's time people were still offering sacrifices, which was proper; but the worship must be sincere. Offering the sacrifice alone was not adequate. As a matter of fact, the Old Testament prophets preached this same thing and if we turn to Isaiah 1 we get an idea of how the prophets in the Old Testament talked to the people. For instance Isaiah reports God saying: (Isaiah 1:11)

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

That was the very thing they were supposed to do when they came to worship God and here He is telling them that He is fed up with it when they are bringing in these sacrifices. We read further, "When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?" (When we boil that down to everyday language it means, "who asked you to come and pretend that you are worshipping me?") "Bring no more vain oblations" (going through the exercise of worship when you don't mean it). "Incense is an abomination unto me" (incense was associated with praying. This is saying "praying is an abomination unto me," going through prayers, just saying them). "The new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot bear . . ." (God is saying He cannot put up with it). "Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye

spread forth your hands" (gesture of prayer). "I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." This implies that just going through the routine of public services does not count; that is not the important thing. Let us turn now to Matthew 3 and we will hear John the Baptist: (Matthew 3:7, 8)

But when he saw (that is, John the Baptist) many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.

That is the way John preached to them – heart-searching challenge to all who come to the house of worship. If you are going to come to worship God, mean it. We read in Mark, "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." You go through your exercises, you bring your sacrifices, but you must mean it. Because John fearlessly preached the truth of the Gospel, Herod, prompted by his wife, had John beheaded. But before that happened John, when he was in prison, sent a committee of several of his disciples to interview Jesus of Nazareth, who had started preaching. It had not troubled John when people came and reported that more folks were listening to Jesus of Nazareth; he said the friends of the bridegroom rejoice with the bridegroom. But he sent these people to ask Jesus of Nazareth the question, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" It will help to understand this if we keep in mind what Peter said in I Peter 1:10, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you." The Old Testament prophets had said there was a way of approaching God that would be revealed. It would be called the New Covenant and they preached about it. They inquired and searched diligently:

Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

There was a big problem for those Old Testament prophets. They knew that Messiah would suffer – the 53rd chapter of Isaiah describes it. And they knew that Messiah would reign – the 10th and 11th chapters of Isaiah describe it. And they knew there would be glory. They could not understand that. There was actually a theory among them that there would be two Messiahs – two Christs. One would come to suffer – as the Lamb; and one would come to rule – as the Lion. What John did not know, and those people in the Old Testament days did not see clearly, was the resurrection.

That is how it is that the person who suffered could also rule. "Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you." In the book of Revelation we read that the Lamb will be on the throne but the Lamb is identified this way: it is the Lamb that was slain and raised from the dead who will be on the throne. Effective evangelism today, when people carry out the message of the Gospel, begins with this message of John the Baptist, "Repent" and goes on to say, "Believe the Gospel"

Chapter 4

Would you think a really good person could ever be tempted?

We shall consider now the baptism and temptation of Jesus Christ. Baptism as a practice was not begun by John the Baptist; it was a common practice in those days – not only among Jews but among other people. It was in the culture; a simple practice that symbolized the reception of the message. When a teacher or speaker presented a challenging message some hearers would respond and submitting to the ceremony of baptism was a sign the message was received. The message John delivered was repentance for the remission of sins. We should remember that John was preaching to the Jews who practiced offering sacrifices to God for their sins on the basis that without the shedding of blood there is no remission. And that was true. But the Old Testament prophets and John preached the necessity of making that offering with a repentant heart. Just making the offering would not do.

When Jesus of Nazareth came to be baptized by John, he was reluctant to do it. His message was repentance and he knew that his cousin Jesus of Nazareth had no need to repent. There is probably no greater tribute to the manner of life that Jesus of Nazareth lived than the fact that his cousin John saw no evil in Him. John said, "You do not need to come here; I need to come to you." A tribute on the part of a man who was sensitive, filled with the Holy Spirit from the beginning of his life.

At the time this practice was performed by John the Baptist (it behooved Him to fulfill all righteousness) there was a voice from heaven, which lifted this occasion out of the ordinary. This authenticated everything as from God. It might be important to notice how, in that voice, the triune God is revealed. Many people wonder about the Trinity – about three persons in the one Godhead, and they are inclined to feel that it must be the one person – the one God in three different aspects. But notice this: when that voice came from heaven "This is my beloved Son," that would be the voice of God the Father speaking about Jesus of Nazareth there with John. When that happened the Holy Spirit came down as a dove and settled upon Jesus of Nazareth. So in that incident the three persons of the Godhead acted singly and separately so that we cannot possibly think that it is one person in three different ways.

We come now to the matter of the temptation of Jesus of Nazareth. In Matthew 4:1 we read, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." This is something we need to note. Sometimes we have a feeling, if we have difficulty or something comes up that challenges us, as though God is not watching over us. But are we ready to realize that He might lead us into that very situation on purpose? Here was a course of action presented to the Lord Jesus in the temptation which promised personal satisfaction and that is the way temptation comes.

There are three avenues of temptation suggested in I John 2:16, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." The lust of the flesh: you can use the word appetite; it would feel good. The lust of the eyes: imagination; it would look good. The pride of life: vanity. If I did that or I had that it would set me up. Along those three avenues temptation comes; that is the way it was with Eve in the garden. God had told Adam and Eve that all of the trees in the garden were for their use but one and of that one they were not to eat. We realize that the situation was set up in such a way that Adam and Eve would be confronted by this one restriction and when Eve looked at it she saw that the fruit of that tree was good for food: that would be the lust of the flesh. And it was pleasant to the eyes. That would be the desire of the eyes. And it was a thing to be desired to make one wise: that would be the pride of life. You will remember Eve took of the fruit and ate. She sinned.

When the Lord Jesus was confronted by this temptation we see something new in the function of the Word of God. You realize that in answering the temptation of Satan He quoted Scripture. He used Scripture as the Sword of the Spirit with which to resist the temptation of Satan. "It is written." My own thinking is that we are on the wrong track when we try to figure it out. Arguing about it – no. Find the

word of God as it is written. When Satan presented the suggestion "Turn these stones into bread" because He was hungry after forty days of fasting, He answered and said, "Man shall not live by bread alone. It is written {and it was written in the book of Deuteronomy) that man shall not live by bread alone. And when Satan again quoted Scripture to Him, "It is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee" and he took Him up to the top of a high mountain and suggested that He cast Himself down and prove that He was the Son of God the Lord said, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

There is a marvelous principle of Bible interpretation here: we compare Scripture with Scripture. This is written over here but look to see where it is written again – some other word of Scripture – and the truth will be in the balance. The sword of the Spirit (and the very word sword is a weapon for attack), the way in which He defended Himself in attacking Satan by quoting what Almighty God had said, was most effective. Just think: He did not argue what would happen if He did wrong; He did not reason it out; He did not state alternatives: He could do this or that. He simply quoted Scripture as it is written.

This leaves us, then, face to face with the realization that just as the Bible tells us about Christ and reveals the marvelous truth of the Gospel, so the Bible tells us about Satan. There is much we do not understand, that we cannot explain. The whole significance of the reality of Satan is lodged in the councils of God. Christ comes to redeem: Satan aims to destroy. Christ is the truth: Satan is a liar and the father of it. Christ acts to reveal: Satan acts to deceive.

Satan is permitted to test, to tempt, God's people and we might keep this in mind: if he did not hesitate to tempt Jesus of Nazareth, he will not hesitate to tempt us. I often say the best word I know about Satan is this: Satan trembles when he sees the weakest saint upon his knees.

Chapter 5

Do you realize that the manner of life which would be acceptable to God is described in the Sermon on the Mount?

That which is shown in the Sermon on the Mount is a manner of living quite beyond human ability and understanding. It is set forth to show what God would approve even though it condemns the human soul because man does not keep it. This is the manner of life that God would bless and man needs to know what God will accept. In the opening part of this sermon, in the Gospel according to Matthew, chapter 5, verses 1 to 12, we have the Beatitudes, a portion of Scripture children oftentimes memorize. This is a description of Godly living; a kind of living there would be in the Kingdom of God. When God has His way in the soul, when He is ruling as King, this is how the person would live.

The Beatitudes were never intended as a goal; this is not something to strive for. This is man's mistake – a common error of the human heart. We read what should be and immediately we think we will do it. This is not the consequence of effort – you could not do it if you tried. This would be the result of having the will of God activated in a person. When you and I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as our Savior and Lord and yield to Him, God does something in us that He calls being born again – regeneration. God then gives to us the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit within us will prompt us to do the will of God. And when we do the will of God it will look like this in the Beatitudes. All of the Beatitudes are to be found in the Old Testament.

Matthew 5:13-16 is a very familiar passage:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

If people live in obedience to the indwelling Spirit of God and follow through on what He wants them to do, they will live in accordance with what is described in the Beatitudes and be blessed. Salt makes food savory and salt is also a preservative and a few believers in any given situation help. Again, you are the light of the world: wherever there are believers, people can see things because by comparison others can learn. Folks are blessed by the testimony and life of true believers.

In the rest of chapter 5 we read that righteousness – the condition of being right in God's sight, to be real and true and sincere must be inner. The Scribes and the Pharisees of that day who went by the Scriptures of the Old Testament, were those who talked a good life. They could tell what the Bible required but the Lord pointed out that the righteousness of those in the Kingdom of God has to be more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees; it is in the heart and soul of the believer.

The law of God says do not kill but the Word of God and the power of God in the soul prompt us to hate not; the law of God says, in so many words not to commit adultery but the Spirit of God in the heart prompts the individual not to even think evil. The law of God arranges for justice – an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (and by the way, that is not the law of the jungle: the law of the jungle would be if you knocked out my eye I would not want to knock out your eye, I would want to knock your head off). No; when you see justice operating you are already seeing love in action: fairness and equity. But that is not grace; that is not the way God would do it. He would go further: He would go the second mile. The law might require that you walk with a man one mile but grace would prompt you then to walk two miles. The law would require you to give him a coat if it was cold weather but grace would prompt you to give him an overcoat also.

In chapter 6 we come to religious practices – praying and almsgiving. The praying is to be in secret; "Enter into thy closet, shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret and He will reward thee openly."

And almsgiving is to be done without sorrow or sadness: give to the poor with gladness. These are the ways the Lord pointed out that religious practices should be unto God.

We are shown in the latter part of chapter 6, verses 19 through 34, that the ambition of the believer is to please God, "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." He then brings out several things that, when I first became a believer, I found hard to understand, "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." I was almost sorry that was in the Bible. I was brought up to work for a living and here it seemed as though He was saying one did not have to work. I later learned that does not mean the Lord Jesus is saying the meadowlarks will sit on the fence posts and God will drop worms into their mouths. Actually, the robin is out there on the lawn looking for the worm. You have heard the expression "getting up with the chickens." If you are to behold the fowls of the air you will get up in the morning. The great thing about the robin looking for the worm is that the robin thinks the worm is there and he looks for it. It is good to have that in mind. Our ambition should be to please God.

He also spoke about the lilies of the field. Look at them: Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. One could ask how that can be but if you think about it, everything Solomon had that looked so glorious was put on him from the outside but everything the lily had came from the inside out and this is what the Lord is teaching.

Chapter 7 is very simple and clear: we are not to be critical of others or condemn them, although we are realistic in our judgment of others to avoid evil. And praying should be practiced and here is a well known formula: "Ask, Seek, Knock." And finally, there is a warning: beware of pretense. The straight gate against the wide gate: few enter the straight gate to eternal life, many go in at the wide gate unto destruction.

The false prophets who bear no fruits are pointed out: many will be disappointed, thinking they have done everything they needed to do in this world, and will find in the world to come that the Lord will say, "I never knew you." And finally, the solid foundation for living in the Kingdom is to do the will of God. Those who obey His Word are the people who build on a solid foundation. Thus there is described for us in the Sermon on the Mount the manner of life that is acceptable to God and we will keep in mind this is what is produced in us by the working of the Holy Spirit. This is what Nicodemus had in mind when he asked the Lord Jesus how anybody could ever do this and the Lord Jesus told him, "You must be born again."

Chapter 6

Can you understand why Jesus of Nazareth performed so many miracles?

It seems easy to think of God being Almighty. We say, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty." The first name for God in the Hebrew Old Testament in the book of Genesis is Elohim, which means "the strong one." When the Son of God became incarnate He looked like a man. There was no supernatural strength in His body but to be able to do His work He needed to be accepted by the believers of God. How could any person get that conviction? In Matthew 9:6-8 at a certain point He said, "But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then saith he to the sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." He performed the miracle with power by way of identifying Himself as actually the Son of God. Here we can see the significance of miracles.

Not all of the miracles which Jesus Christ performed are recorded. In one place John said he thought the world itself could not contain the books that should be written if they were all recorded. But these are selected. John said in chapter 20, verses 30, 31:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

These miracles are recorded not only to show His identity with God but they show the scope of His authority. We shall be looking at some of these now and shall see that in a number of incidents Jesus of Nazareth demonstrated control over natural elements. In Luke 8:22-25 we see very remarkable action on His part, where He stilled the storm at sea. There are important aspects to be noticed:

Now it came to pass on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples: and he said unto them, Let us go over unto the other side of the lake. And they launched forth. But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water, and were in jeopardy. And they came to him, and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.

Think of it. Notice that in this story He was in command. The disciples looked to Him for help. No wonder we read on from there, "And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this? for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him." They saw him as one with authority. We read in Matthew 14:22:

And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord save me.

Whatever you may think of Peter as a man, he did not lack in courage. He got down out of that boat and walked on the water but when he saw the wind boisterous, he took his eyes off the Lord Jesus and he began to sink. In our daily life we sometimes come into situations that are like a storm; when that happens the Lord can draw nigh unto us and He will speak, "Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid." When He says that many have a disposition to say, "Lord, bid me to come unto thee." And when we come, according to His call, then look at the wind and the waves (the circumstances) we begin to sink. But the Lord did not

hold Peter responsible for his fear; when Peter cried out "save me," He reached out and caught him.

I want to draw your attention to one more illustration along this line: in Mark 11:12-14 we are told as He walked along and saw a fig tree, there were no figs on it. He made the comment that no man would get any figs from that tree in the future. When they came by the next day the tree had wilted and Peter said, "The fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away." And the Lord said, "Have faith in God." This is significant because of a suggestion here that all fruit-bearing is by the power of God. If He could withhold the power of God and it would wither, so we must count that when these trees grow and bear fruit, this is by the power of God.

In many other cases we find that Jesus of Nazareth demonstrated His control over disease. If you think of disease as a symbol for sin, there is much to be learned in the following verses. For instance, in Luke 5:12-15 we have the leper who came to the Lord and said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." And He looked on him with compassion and said, "I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him." Let that word speak to you. On other occasions He might seem to have used other means but here it was His word and His word has the authority.

In Luke 5:18-26 we have the case of the palsied man, a wonderful story about a challenge for friendship. Four friends brought him to the Lord and it was the faith of those friends that turned the tide. We read the story of the centurion's servant in Luke 7:2-10 and how the centurion's faith was rewarded and the servant healed. In Luke 13:11-17 we have the case of the crippled woman of whom the Lord said, "whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years." Does this mean Satan has the power to bind and cripple us? He did in that case but the Lord set her free. And in Luke 18:35-43 the blind beggar kept crying out and the Lord asked what he wanted, "What will you have? And the beggar said, 'Lord that I may receive my sight.' And Jesus said to him, 'Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee.' And immediately he received his sight."

Now in all these amazing incidents you will not find anything grotesque. He did not make anybody see with their ears – no. He made them see with their eyes and hear with their ears and walk with their feet – that kind of thing. There was nothing anti-natural but certainly supernatural – yes.

Chapter 7

Do you think demons are actually real?

In making a study of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and as we read the record in the New Testament, we are confronted again and again by the reference to demons. We read in Matthew 8:28-34

And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? And there was a good way off from them a herd of many swine feeding. So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils. And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts.

Can you accept this story? That is the way it is in the New testament. We need to be conscious of the fact that there are people who have this kind of experience. In Mark 1:23-28: we read:

And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region around about Galilee.

Did you notice again the words form the unclean spirit? "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." Now turn to Luke 4:32:

And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power. And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou coming to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.

The record is too plain and too simple to be mistaken. One of the reasons why we read these scriptural passages is to attest to the authenticity of the accounts. And now in Mark we read at the beginning of chapter 5, verse 1-6:

And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him.

Such persons are encountered today. I suspect that we may not have even met these people because their condition is diagnosed differently today and whenever anybody is like this, we have a way of referring to them as if they had lost their mind or that something had happened to them psychologically and they are put away as people who are insane. We read in Mark, chapter 5, verse 6:

But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? I adjure thee, by God, that thou torment me not.

This was the same sort of reaction; the demon recognized the Son of God. Notice Mark 5:8-13:

For he said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought him much that he would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea (they were about two thousand), and were choked in the sea.

Remember, we read another passage in Matthew concerning two men of Gergesenes to whom the same sort of thing happened. Notice in Mark 5:14-16 how this is similar:

And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray him to depart out of their coasts. And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.

The Lord wanted the delivered man to testify. The testimony of deliverance on the part of that man prepared the people to later receive the Lord. Luke tells us that when the Lord came back that way many people came out to hear him and were blessed.

All this brings to mind that when Jesus of Nazareth was here He demonstrated the power to deliver human beings from spiritual oppression. We read them in the Scriptures and feel moved to believe they are actually true. Those of us who believe in the Lord could render a service to afflicted souls if we understood more of the power and the activity of Satan and the way in which he harasses human beings.

Chapter 8

Do you really think that if a person dies, he can live again?

In our meditation about the life and teaching of Christ Jesus the following passages are most significant. We read in John 11:25, 26:

Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

These are remarkable words. Death is as common as life. It is strange in some ways to say, but death is more impressive. People being alive do not attract special attention but a dead body is always noticeable. To talk about God, heaven and hell brings thoughts of death. And when one asks oneself what is death, the amazing thing is that death is just the absence of life. Life is gone. We ask ourselves then – what is life? And here we are up against the fact that no one really knows. About all one can say is that it is a condition in which certain processes go on. Death is merely the absence of life. We are glad that we can have life; we seek to save it by every means and if we have some questionable feelings about our own life we certainly want the lives of our children and other persons saved.

Jesus of Nazareth claimed to have authority over life and said this was given to Him by His Father. In John 5:21 the Lord Jesus said, "For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." That verb *quicken* means *make alive*; to have it come alive like a bud on A tree in the spring of the year is quickened when it starts to grow. Again in John 5:26, "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." Jesus of Nazareth performed miracles to show that He was the Son of God and of all the miracles he performed, perhaps there is none as significant as His power over death. We read in Luke 7:12:

Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on all: and they glorified God, saying, That a great prophet is risen up among us; and, That God hath visited his people. And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.

It was a tremendously amazing thing he had done. Nothing is argued, nothing is explained, nothing is proven: it is simply done.

Another story is told three times: in Matthew 9 you will find it in verses 18, 19 and then in verses 23-26; in Mark 5:22-24 and then verses 35-43 and Luke 8:41, 42 and verses 49-56. Each of these stories tell about the man who came to the Lord Jesus and told Him, "My daughter is even now dead, but come and lay thy hand upon her and she shall live. He touched her by the hand and the maid arose. Mark says, "My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live." And we read, "He took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cu'mi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, (I say unto thee), arise." And straightway she arose. And Luke tells us about the man who had one daughter and she lay a-dying and he came and talked to the Lord Jesus who went to his house, took her by the hand and said to her, "Maid, arise." And her spirit came again and she arose straightway. There can be no doubt about the message for us. Perhaps the most impressive case of all is in the raising of Lazarus, which we read in John 11:1-2:

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.

While we are looking at this we might take note of the fact that because we belong to the Lord and are sure He cares for us, that does not mean that we will never have sickness (John 11:4-6).

When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the son of God might be glorified thereby. Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus. When he heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.

When Mary and Martha sent Him word that "he whom thou lovest is sick" that is like prayer. They sent word to Him the way you and I, in praying, send word to God. He stayed where He was two more days and after that He said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." When he came Martha ran out to meet Him and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." She knew He could have kept him alive. We then read (John 11:25-34):

Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. . . . Where have ye laid him?

Something very important happened as He stood by the grave and all were around, mourning: Jesus wept. Pause for a moment: He knew what He would do. Why did He weep? Out of sympathy or out of compassion? This is why: He told them to take away the stone that was rolled up to the grave because they understood Lazarus was dead but when Jesus Christ came, He could change it. He asked them to roll away the stone because they needed to open up the case and when we come to the Lord in prayer – it may be about some things we feel discouraged totally about, we need not be surprised if the Lord should say, "Take away the stone." Open it up. So they did and He raised Lazarus from the dead.

Chapter 9

Do you realize that you learn something in every event you experience?

Jesus of Nazareth used events in which He was involved to teach the eternal spiritual truths of God. The story of the woman who came to anoint His feet and to dry them with the hair of her head is told in Luke 7:36-50. You will remember how the Pharisee in whose home He was visiting at the time felt that Jesus of Nazareth did not act in the way he expected Him to. He indicated he thought that if Jesus of Nazareth was a highly spiritual man He would have known what kind of woman it was who was touching Him because she was a woman of the streets. Jesus of Nazareth knew how the man felt and said to him, "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee." And He told him a parable about how a certain man had two servants: one owed him 500 pence and the other owed him just a few pence. When neither had anything to pay he forgave both of them. The story goes on to say that when the servant who had been forgiven the large sum of money was dealing with the servant who owed a little, he was very strict and insisted on receiving exact money; if he did not have the money the man was to be put under bondage to work it out. The people came and told the master that the person to whom he did forgive the large sum would not forgive his fellow servant.

The Lord told the parable how the master called the servant in and reminded him that he had forgiven him this large sum and now this other servant owed him just a little and he could not forgive him, so he cancelled the forgiveness and turned the man out. The parable is very pointed and the people knew what He was saying but He said to Simon the Pharisee, "Which of those two people that were forgiven, the one with 500 pence and the other with just a few pence, would have loved the master the most? and the man said, "I suppose the man whom He forgave the most." And He said, "Thou hast rightly said." He then pointed out that when He had come into his house the Pharisee had treated him with scant courtesy but this woman had actually washed His feet with her tears and anointed them with precious ointment. He went on to say "Her sins which are many were forgiven" and that was the reason why she loved Him as she did.

This brings to us a very simple truth: to love God more it will be important to appreciate the forgiveness of sins more. The more I appreciate the forgiveness of my sins, the more I will love God. In verses 29-36 another incident occurred. When the people came to the Lord Jesus and asked Him to show them a sign that He really was from God, He told them that the only sign of the Kingdom of God that would ever be manifested would be the resurrection. Entrance into the Kingdom of God would be by death. The new life is the life of God in the believer and that will only appear in those who have yielded themselves to God in the sense that they have crucified themselves. He took that incident when they were looking for a sign to find the occasion to tell them the only sign they would ever have would be the resurrection because that is the true sign of the Kingdom of God. We enter into the Kingdom of God by reckoning ourselves to be dead indeed unto sin and alive unto God.

In Luke 9:46-48 there was some argument that had come up among the disciples as to who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven and the Lord Jesus took that occasion to teach them that the way to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven is to take the place of a servant. He took a child and set this little child before them, telling them that expect they would become as little children, they would not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And in Luke 10:38-42 there is a familiar passage, the occasion when the Lord Jesus was in the home of Mary and Martha and while He was there Martha complained about Mary, who did not help with the housework. And He told her, "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and concerned about so many things. Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her." Being preoccupied with details is not wise when it comes to dealing with God. Mary's way of living is the better way, to seek first the blessing of God and other things will be added.

In Luke 13:1-5 another incident is recorded: People came to the Lord Jesus and told Him of the

Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Certain Galileans had been killed while they were worshipping God and Jesus answering said unto them, "Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." He took the occasion of this incident of calamity to teach that calamities are not careless accidents. God is in control and He is overruling. The believer will be able to look for God's hand in every calamity because when that occurs God is in it.

In Luke 17:11-19 there is a very similar passage where the Lord actually benefited ten lepers. Only one came back to give thanks and Jesus of Nazareth made that the occasion to point out that he was the only one to do so. Giving thanks to God is noticed; He sees. And the Lord Jesus taught that thanksgiving to God is proper and failure to do so is the first step away from God; the first step into apostasy.

In Luke 19:28-40 we have the Lord Jesus coming into the city of Jerusalem riding upon a colt, the foal of an ass. What we see there is that the coming King of Kings is humble. Grown people and children all went out to welcome Him and don't miss the fact that the animal walked quietly with Jesus of Nazareth riding on him although he had never been ridden before. Another incident of interest is told in Luke 21:1-4, a familiar incident of the poor woman who came to make a donation in the temple. We read He looked up and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury; He saw also a certain poor widow casting in two mites and he said:

Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.

He took that incident and talked to the people about servants being judged not by comparing what they do with what other people do but by understanding their opportunity according to the individual's opportunity what was the action and this is what God sees.

We have reviewed a number of the practical incidents in which Jesus of Nazareth taught the people around Him in the course of the events as they happened because the people could see them even more clearly what the will of God actually was for them.

Chapter 10

Did you know that the truth of God's will can be set forth in common language?

We continue our study of the life and the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth by noticing His style of teaching. He preached the will of God using the everyday language of common people. In Luke 4:1-13 we have that well known incident when Satan tempted Jesus of Nazareth in the wilderness. In facing the temptation Jesus of Nazareth simply quoted Scripture saying, "As it is written." He offered no argument; He offered no explanation or special insight. He just said, "As it is written." There is no unique insight needed to face the temptations of Satan. What we need to know is written in the Scriptures.

The Bible has the authority and the clarity to show us and to lead us. When we read on in chapter 4, verses 16-29, we have a record of how Jesus of Nazareth was preaching in the synagogue and He did not make any new disclosures from God. When He talked to the people in the synagogue He said to them, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." He had read to them a passage in Isaiah and then He talked about the passage and pointed out that in His own actions, in His own being there and presenting Himself before them, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." As simple as that.

In the next chapter, Luke 5:30-39, we have the incident when Jesus of Nazareth was facing the scribes and Pharisees who criticized Him about the fact that He associated with Publicans and sinners. In dealing with them He used plain common sense. There is no shaft of psychological insight like a flash shining through this – not at all. He used ordinary, everyday common sense. They criticized Him because they were in sin and He answered them by pointing out the obvious, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick."

After all, the sinners should be invited to church just like sick people should be taken to the hospital. Is the church supposed to be a place where a person can get to know God? Then bring in the people who need it. This is the way the Lord would speak. No profound psychological discussion of the influence of culture – anything of that nature. And in chapter 6, when some of the Pharisees criticized the disciples for shelling wheat to eat on the Sabbath Day, claiming that was a form of harvesting and they were breaking the law, Jesus of Nazareth used an incident recorded in Scripture involving David to show that man can interpret regulations in the light of actual need. Need prevails over regulations. Since man was put into the world to have dominion over it, He used the expression, "The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." He is in charge of everything, including the regulation.

This is rather striking and some people have difficulty accepting this but they should look at it. The disciples could be blamed for harvesting because they did shell the wheat – there is no doubt about that, but He did not argue about it and He did not point out how small the Pharisees were in making this criticism. He faced their criticism with simple discussion: man had been put in charge of things in this world; he was to subdue the earth and this is part of his dominion – even the matter of interpreting regulations. What He said was simple, straightforward. The actual situation with need is more important than the regulations which are made for general conduct.

In Luke 9:23 Jesus of Nazareth revealed the will of God for all who want to follow Him. He did not bring special insight or discuss the kind of psychology a man needed to have in order to become a believer. He pointed out something that anybody can do at any time, anywhere. He did not tell them to change their location or give up their livelihood; He gave simple guidance in following Him which is just this: let him deny himself. It is as simple as that.

Jesus of Nazareth gave instruction to the seventy before they went out to preach in Luke 10:2, "Therefore said he unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest." Anybody listening would know what He means. And toward the end of the chapter we come to an incident I know a great many people are acquainted with; when Martha came to Him and complained that her sister, Mary, left her to serve alone,

He simply told Martha, "But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." No argument, no comparison of personalities – just a simple statement of fact.

In Luke 11:28 we see where Jesus of Nazareth was told His mother had been specially blessed because she gave birth to Him. He turned attention to any who obeyed the Gospel by saying, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." That is interesting because while He had nothing against His mother, and did not question what the angel had said to her (that she was blessed above all women), instead of making a discussion of that He simply drew their attention to the fact that anybody who hears the Word of God and keeps it is among God's chosen and preferred people. "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." In other words, as we have considered these matters it is very clear that the great truths from God can be simply stated in ordinary, everyday language.

Chapter 11

Do you realize that a story is often more convincing than an argument?

"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them." These words, found in Matthew 13:34 followed a number of His parables in that chapter. A parable has been defined as an earthly story with heavenly meaning; a story that describes the procedure that can be understood. For the parable to be effective it needs to be the kind of story that can be understood by the person hearing it and it is told to illustrate some aspect of God's will among men. Jesus of Nazareth taught people the mind and the will of God in parables and we have this remarkable statement that "without a parable spake he not unto them." We could use the word *Illustration*, which we often say are like windows in a sermon – they show far more than the words of the sermon convey.

Let us notice some of these parables in the book of Luke. We turn first to Luke 5:36-39:

And he spake also a parable unto them; No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of new agreeth not with the old. And no man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But new wine must be put into new bottles; and both are preserved. No man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better.

In these words the Lord Jesus is recorded as having pointed out to the people something that John, in writing about it, says in another way, "You must be born again." As the grace of God comes into the human heart it needs to come into a regenerated human heart. I need to be different in order to receive and appreciate the truth of God. And when it comes to talking about being born again you might have in mind that it is not something one does for oneself. When you were born the first time into this world you did not have anything to say about it and so it is when you are born again. This is something God does for anybody who will believe in the Lord Jesus Christ – receiving the Gospel and committing himself to the Lord Jesus Christ, who will be regenerated and become a new creature in Christ Jesus. And in him the grace of God will operate.

In chapter 7 the Lord Jesus was in the house of the Pharisee and a woman of the street came to anoint His feet with perfume, shedding tears over His feet while she was doing it and wiping them with the hairs of her head. The Pharisee had in mind that the behavior of Jesus of Nazareth was strange. If this man were a prophet He would know what kind of woman this is but He did not seem to shrink from her. Then the Lord Jesus told a parable in verses 41-48 which we have previously studied.

In Luke 8:4-5 we have one of the most familiar parables in all the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. We commonly call it the Parable of the Sower and the Seed but it could well have been given the title "The Soil." The titles we give to these parables are not inspired; the titles are our way of handling them. The Scriptures do not use it that way. In this case you will remember the sower went forth to sow and as he scattered the seed as was the custom in sowing in those days, it fell on different kinds of ground. And the point in the parable is that the kind of ground determines the response. Some that fell on the wayside (that is, on the beaten path) lay there and did not get into the ground and the birds of the air came and picked it up. Some fell on stony ground and it sprang up quickly but had no roots and withered. Then some fell on the weedy ground that was covered with thistles and thorns; the seeds sprang up but the weeds choked them and they did not become fruitful. Some fell on good ground and they gave forth a harvest.

So the Lord Jesus is teaching the people this way that the message told to different kinds of people will bring different reactions. The parable itself is simple and clear and anyone can read it and know the truth that the Lord is seeking to share.

In Luke 10 we have a wonderful story: the parable of the Good Samaritan. This has been called the

most effective piece of literature in the world. Probably caused more actual change in the conduct of people than any other writing in the whole literature of the world. It gives a clear distinction of attitudes toward property; it has a deeper meaning than we ordinarily think because it shows how people feel with reference to property. As the man was walking from Jerusalem to Jericho he fell among thieves. The attitude of thieves is: what is yours is mine and I will take it if I can. While the man was lying in the ditch a priest came by, saw him and went on. A Levite came along next; both did the same thing: what is mine is my own and I will keep it, and both kept going.

When the Good Samaritan came along his attitude is expressed this way: what is mine is yours if you need it. He dressed the wounds and took the man to an inn to be cared for. We have the parable of the importunate friend in chapter 11. It told how a friend came to another friend past midnight, asking for food, and the Lord said that even though the man in the house would not get up and give him the food on the basis of friendship but because of his need, He would get up and give as much as he needed. This brings out a simple fact that need is more dynamic and more moving than friendship.

In Luke 14 we have the story of the great supper. All were invited and a number of them began to make excuses. Perhaps this parable is the most commonly neglected, probably because few people like to hear about ignoring the invitation because it may be final; there may not be another one. The most remarkable collection of parables in Luke, I think, is in Luke 15. They are the parables about the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. These parables were told to the Pharisees by way of emphasizing God's interest in seeking and saving the lost and probably the greatest insight given to us in this parable is that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. You might have in mind the lost sheep knew it was lost but did not know the way home. The lost coin did not know it was lost. But it was. The lost son knew he was lost and he knew the way home. Nobody came for him. The shepherd went looking for the sheep. The woman swept the house to find the coin but nobody went for the son. He knew the way home.

All of this is conveyed in story fashion, bringing to the heart and mind remarkable truth. I might bring one more parable to mind: the incident of the Pharisee and the Publican. Both were going in to pray. The amazing thing is that the Pharisee, who was a good man, and the Publican, who was understood to be a sinner, came into the presence of God and because the Pharisee was conceited and proud, God did not hear him but because the Publican was humble and repentant, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other.

In these remarkable ways Jesus of Nazareth taught the will of God and the Word of God by using parables.

Chapter 12

Can you see the importance of miracles in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth?

Jesus Christ came into the world to reveal the Gospel of God. I am sure each of us knows that and we have it in mind. The Gospel of God is the glad tidings that souls can be saved. There is one great fact that we should keep in mind: salvation is not by any natural process; the soul is not saved by anything man does. It is not how smart he is; how good he is or how active he is; it does not depend upon man at all. It depends upon the living Lord Jesus Christ, who will save to the uttermost those who come unto God by Him. This fact that salvation is not by any natural process is associated with another great fact: it requires a supernatural element. It will take an original act of Almighty God.

In order to understand and accept the Gospel that God sent His Son into the world to seek and to save the lost, the sinner must be ready to believe supernatural action because that is the way it is going to be done; to be ready to believe that Jesus of Nazareth has the power, the authority and the willingness to act supernaturally. He could have told them in so many words but that would still be His word. He performed miracles and the supernatural beyond the ordinary experiences and attracted attention in that way. He indicated the procedure anyone should follow in coming to Him and he also indicated the power of God that would be exercised when God would save that soul.

We turn now in the book of Luke to a number of passages which will help us to see how the Lord Jesus taught the people – how He showed them His procedures. In Luke 5:4-11 we read:

Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

We may be sure those men were impressed by this action on the part of Jesus of Nazareth. Later in this same chapter we read (Luke 5:12-16):

And it came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And he put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. . . . And behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone? But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?

In other words, only God could do either one of these things (Luke 5:17-23).

But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins (he said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things today.

In this Jesus of Nazareth demonstrated that He could do supernatural things. Beginning at verse 6 in chapter 6 we read:

And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him. But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you

one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus. And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

In Luke 7:1-10 we have the occasion when the centurion came and said, "My servant is sick. Speak the word and he will get well." Jesus of Nazareth spoke the word and the man got well. There is an account in the same chapter when He was going along on the street and saw a funeral procession. A widow's son had died, her only son. He stopped the procession, went over, and touched the bier where the casket was being carried and said to the dead person, "Arise." And he did.

Jesus of Nazareth conveyed a message to the people among whom He dealt, telling them what God's will was and that God intended to bless them. And in chapter 8 we have another interesting incident – the stilling of the storm at sea. There were no human beings involved. He was not addressing Himself to anybody and allowing any "kind of reaction on the part of people He talked to the elements and He commanded the waves to be still and they were. Only God could do that, and He was God.

The feeding of the multitude was recorded in Luke 9:12-17. About 5,000 were there and they were fed with a few loaves and fishes. These miracles were performed in the course of the teaching by Jesus of Nazareth. Obviously these miracles set it forth plainly – only God could do these things. Yes, He was God – the One in whom we have put our trust. We give Him the praise and the glory.

Chapter 13

Can you see how arguing would ever be helpful in sharing the Gospel?

Sometimes a person to whom you tell the Gospel has preconceived ideas that prevent him from believing what you say. We shall be considering something that happened in the life of Christ Jesus and it has to do with the fact that while He was living here and sharing with people the truth of God, He did spend some time in argument and several of these instances are recorded. In my own experience, as I was seeking to come to belief, I was helped with the passage in Romans 10:9-10, where Paul says:

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

That bothered me. I felt aggrieved that such an impossible condition should be laid down. I was committed to an idea I had picked up in high school and I felt it was valid that miracles are impossible. Everything was guided by natural law and when I talked about the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ I just overlooked it. That could not have happened and that is also the way I felt about the Virgin Birth. When I read about the various miracles I thought that was an old fashioned way of describing what it looked like. All of which was because I was committed to a basic idea which was wrong. The basic idea I had was that miracles are impossible. If one has that in mind he cannot believe the Virgin Birth, or that He opened the eyes of the blind or healed the leper with His Word or raised the dead. If one does not believe in miracles he cannot have the God of the Bible and that effectually thwarted my acceptance of the Gospel. But in my own particular case I was able to argue myself free from this idea and I came to see that if there could be no miracles then how did the world come to pass in the first place?

By the grace of God I was helped to see the weakness, the fallacy of the ideas I had been holding. Now let us look at some instances in Scripture. We read in Luke 11, beginning at verse 14:

And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered. But some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils. And others, tempting him sought of him a sign from heaven. But he, knowing their thoughts, said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth. If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils through Beelzebub. And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore shall they be your judges. But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you. When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils. He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.

As you see it, why didn't the Lord just say they were wrong in this discussion and then tell them the truth? He discussed the matter in such a way that He called upon them to admit that their opposition was not reasonable. As long as the people held the view that He cast out demons by cooperation with Satan, they could not see Him as He really was – the Son of God. The argument was based on common sense. He did not say He was too good or too holy for that. He took their own point of view and said in effect, "you are saying I am cooperating with Satan in casting out demons. That means the devil is sharing with me in the casting out of demons and that means he is against himself." That does not make sense. When once the preconceived error was removed, then the testimony of the Lord Jesus could challenge.

The Gospel presents God as benevolent and gracious and challenges me to count on God being ready to help me. In the human being there is naturally skepticism about God's goodness and graciousness. And

when we turn to chapter 12 we read a familiar passage in verses 22-30:

Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what he shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

Now listen to this argument:

Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls. ..Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

He reasons with them that their natural skepticism, in which they doubt that God will do them good is unfounded because if they look around in nature they will see that God does do good, so that because of the cynical skepticism in the heart God will never do anything good for me is not reasonable. The Gospel teaches that God will save and deliver at any time and at any place. In chapter 13, verses 11-17 tell of the healing of the woman who was bound for eighteen years:

The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

In other words, the argument was always pointed against the error they had in mind; it was never used to strengthen the presentation of what He had to say because what He had to say was just as the Word of God. But the opposition to that word that comes out of my heart could be reasoned with and argued with. In dealing with people who have ideas that may be wrong, we can argue with their ideas but when it comes to the Gospel we simply tell it as it is.

Chapter 14

Can you see how my expectation of what will happen can affect my daily living experience?

Jesus of Nazareth revealed the promises of God which can affect the human being. In thinking of my past and of the days gone by, in my heart I can say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped me." Then I think of the present and the greatest thing I can say to myself is, "Thou God seest me." I look ahead to the future because I am moving into it with the uncertainties, because no man knows what a day will bring forth, and I can hear Him say, "Lo, I am with you always." This is the way in which we are blessed by the revelation that is in Christ Jesus.

The future intrigues people. We cannot help being interested in it. For young people the future usually is a challenge to hopeful imagination of big achievements. Young people are always going to do something bigger and better than it has ever been done before. Old people have the dread of coming disaster. They know death is sure and they are moving toward it. In between for the mature people, those who have been found in the world and know about life, there is oftentimes a cynical skepticism of probable loss. Every way we turn there is always the chance our team will lose the game. The future, even though it does not always look good and always promises us wonderful things, is none the less challenging and intriguing to us.

Believers have the basis for hope for a glorious future because God will be in it and when Jesus of Nazareth was here He talked to people time and again about that which would come in the future and told them things that would be helpful for them. In Luke 9:22 we read these words:

The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

This was something He told them all to have in mind. They were looking to Him as the Son of God, with the power of God, and he warns them to have one thing in mind about His coming crucifixion: it will happen. And that is a fact every believer needs to remember: self-crucifixion will come. Somewhere up the road ahead of us there will come experiences that will be shattering out of which we are to turn to God. The future has something in store for the believer personally and it will include passing through his experience of the cross. Paul could say, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me."

As the believer comes to the Lord and moves onward, he can keep in mind that this is the way it will be. In Luke 13:28-30 are words along another line:

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

This is a sober word; it is talking about the future. The fact is that some people have overrated their own response to God's call. They have in some way responded to the Gospel and they have assumed that what they have done is acceptable to God. Believers cannot be sure of their own adequacy.

When I think about the future and what I have done as the basis of my expectation I can be uncertain. So the Lord presented a report of the past with the prediction of what will happen. In the past some people did actually believe and He named the patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and all the prophets. In the future some will be shocked to learn that their response was not valid. The Lord Jesus mentioned the fact that a big showdown will surely come and some will be left out. And it is important; we need to think about it. God's plan for the future includes the return of the Lord. Our Lord Jesus taught several parables to emphasize that the servant living in the world today should have in mind that his master is coming back and will ask for an accounting. In His teaching Jesus of Nazareth taught that certain things would happen with reference to the future. Standing in the city of Jerusalem He gave them to understand that the city

would be destroyed and the temple would not have one stone left upon another.

The second truth He emphasized they should keep in mind is that the Lord will return and they also should have in mind that when He returns Christ will set up His kingdom. In predicting these developments He challenged believers to be diligent; they were not to depend upon temporal things and they were not to give final commitment to the things of this world. Now the harvest will come. The Lord Jesus is the Savior and when He saves He will save forever into eternity but not everybody will believe Him and they will be destroyed; when He comes back He will judge. He will judge according to the law of God and there will be separation on that basis.

In predicting these developments He challenged believers to be very careful and to put no final dependence upon the things of this world. They were to lay up their treasures in heaven. They were to know that judgment will occur and separation will take place. In Luke 21:5-38 He gave them to understand this whole world will be destroyed. How can this be dynamic for our living? For one thing, it will cause us not to be too much attached to what is here and it will cause us not to be too much involved in our expectation of what will happen here. We will be more interested in spiritual matters.

It is a very salutary thing that people who expect to be in the presence of God will take steps to order their lives. We want to be acceptable in His sight; we want Him to see that we're sincere in our response to Him. So we recognize that Jesus of Nazareth taught the people about the future.

Chapter 15

Do you realize miracles were necessary in declaring the Gospel?

Since Jesus of Nazareth came to reveal the Gospel in His teaching and in His work, it was inevitable that He would work miracles. Why? The Gospel tells of God's plan to save sinners and His plan to save sinners is not by showing them how they can manage to do the right thing because they cannot do it; it would never come to pass. The Gospel is a message that tells you God will come into the believer and use His power in raising the dead, to actually lift that individual out of himself into the life of God.

So very much is involved in the phrase "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Let me say that is not "Christ *for* you, the hope of glory"; it is not because Jesus Christ died and I go free because my name is on the church roll. It is true that Christ Jesus died 1900 years ago but it is also true that three days later He arose from the grave and later He showed Himself alive by many infallible proofs in the space of forty days; He ascended into heaven where He is now. But that is not all: He sent His Holy Spirit to come into the heart of believers and show the things of Christ, and makes it possible that God will work in the believer to will and to do of His good pleasure. That is the essence of the Gospel.

The secret of spiritual victory is that God is able to raise the dead. In my natural self I am dead in trespasses and sin and He is able to raise the dead; I receive Him into my heart and He operates in me. The way God does it is by overruling the natural processes; He is far greater than anything in nature. When Jesus of Nazareth went about teaching people the will of God and what the work of God would be, He demonstrated this by works of wonder that overruled the natural situation. Let me list some of these for you as they are found in the book of Luke.

In the first chapter we read about the Virgin Birth: Almighty God actually produced the body in which Jesus of Nazareth lived through Mary but God Himself was responsible for it. When you think that through, get the whole picture in your mind: think back on the creation of the world. I received the life that I have from my parents and they got it from their parents; and so on back and back until we come to the first man, Adam. Where did he come from? Of course, you will say God created him. Exactly. If God created Adam the first man, God created the body of Jesus of Nazareth, the second man, and just as Adam was the first man and all those who are born of the flesh are his children, so Christ Jesus was the second man and all those who have been born again by faith are His. He was the forerunner of regeneration.

We read in II Corinthians 5:17 that "everyone who is in Christ Jesus is a new creature – a new creation. Old things have passed away, behold, all things are become new." And so the Virgin Birth – this exceptional event, is absolutely in place as the beginning of the Gospel of God. In the third chapter of Luke we have the baptism by John, who had been baptizing many people by the river Jordan. When Jesus of Nazareth came to be baptized, John shrank from doing it. Although Jesus of Nazareth was his second cousin he felt he was not fit to do it, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee." But Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). And at that time the Holy Spirit came as a dove and settled upon Jesus of Nazareth – a supernatural event – and the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." All of which was miraculous.

We continue to read in Luke 4 that when He was in the synagogue a man was there with an unclean spirit and Jesus of Nazareth commanded that spirit to come out of him. Here we have the reality of demons – beings that were invisible, all spiritual composition nature – and this opens an entire other world. We are accustomed to dealing with people but this is with spirits. That also opens the door for angels and for the reality of the Holy Spirit and all of this is absolutely part of the whole story.

Later on in chapter 4 see Him healing the sick – men with all kinds of diseases. There can be no doubt about the testimony. Anybody reading the New Testament knows that Jesus of Nazareth healed the sick. Then in chapter 5 we have the instance where He told Peter to go into the lake and catch some fish and we remember Peter told Him there were no fish out there; that he had gone out the night before and toiled all

night to no avail. But He told Peter to go and he said, "At thy word I will let down the net." He caught so many fish he could not bring them in but had to call on the other boats to assist him.

We read in chapter 6 that He was in the synagogue on the Sabbath Day and a person was there with a withered hand. In full view of all, He told this person to stretch out that hand and it was restored. Mind you, no one challenged the authenticity of that event.

Let me remind you that when you put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, He will inwardly bless you. You can ask, talk with Him, and you can share with Him. This does not mean that some power will be placed under your control that you can use for your own purposes and to your own advantage – no; but the things that God will do are extraordinary, they are miraculous, and this is what the Lord Jesus Christ taught.

We thank God for the Gospel. We rejoice in it and pray that God will help us to keep all these things in mind that we may fully appreciate what we have in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 16

Do you realize that being obedient to God in your life does not mean that you will have no trouble?

In turning to God for salvation, the believer expects blessing and he will receive it. We know that joy has been promised, with rest and peace. It sometimes comes as a shock to realize that walking with God entails suffering. The Lord said, "Marvel not if the world hates you; it hated me before it hated you." And again, "The servant is not greater than the Master," and "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for his sake" (Phil. 1:29). And in Luke 9:22 we read these words of Jesus of Nazareth:

The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day.

Notice the way that was worded: it was not just that this was going to happen but it is phrased in such a way as to imply this needed to happen. If we are ever going to be free from the inward tendencies we have to be wayward, we need to go through an experience of suffering. It will be necessary. The old man (the human nature) in us must die and dying is not easy. Let us look in Luke 22:41 at a comment based upon an incident in the Garden of Gethsemane:

And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

What did this mean? Far more than I know, but I do know one thing, it is very clear: He willingly yielded to His Father's will that He should die. I think far more than physical death was involved but we know the will of God was that He go through and suffer death. In that same chapter we read (Luke 22:49-52):

When they which were about him saw what would follow {when the soldiers came to arrest Him} they said unto him, Lord shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

Another account of this incident is in Matthew 26, beginning at verse 51 and these incidents should serve as a guide to us. One way or another we, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, will come into situations we do not like and that are definitely not in our favor. Our disposition will be to fight back or to run and the Lord has set us an example: yield to it. In Luke 22:42 we read, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done." Again in that same chapter, beginning at verse 63, we read, "And the men that held Jesus mocked him, and smote him. And when they had blindfolded him, they struck him on the face, and asked him, saying, Prophecy, who is it that smote thee? And many other things blasphemously spake they against him." He submitted to cruel abuse at His trial and no attempt was made to obtain a fair trial. He would not seek to escape the cross; He had to go through it even as you and I have to go through it if we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Here the Son of God sets the pattern. Born into this world in the flesh, He needed to die in the flesh because He would be raised from the dead. And that is the hope for you and for me.

I have one more word to say with reference to this suffering He endured when He was doing the will of God by yielding Himself: In Hebrews 5:8, "Though he were a Son, yet learned the obedience by the things which he suffered." Wouldn't you understand right away that I need to learn something; that I need to learn what it is to walk with God? That I will when I suffer; when I pass through experiences that are hard to endure. This experience comes to every believer; in my case it came when I was entering the ministry in

a public way. When it happens to you, you will keep in mind that the servant is not greater than his Master.

That is what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. He was to learn obedience – what it means to obey God when you are in the presence of those who are not yielded to God. When we are learning about the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth it will come into our mind very clearly that He showed the will of God by yielding to accept death; He endured abuse, and He accepted the cross.

Chapter 17

Did you ever wonder why Jesus Christ spent so much time with His disciples after He was raised from the dead?

It is very important to realize why Jesus of Nazareth took so much time with His disciples after He was raised from the dead; much more than the story of what happened to Jesus of Nazareth. This is a prediction of what will happen to every believer in Christ. To establish the fact that the body was actually raised from the dead was not simple. It is hard to believe that as we have heard it over and over again. We celebrate it every Easter and still it is difficult to believe it to be true that the body was actually raised from the dead – from a state of death into a state of life.

This is very important. The sentence of dying goes on all the time. Man lives by breathing – he eats and drinks in order that he might live. And the body is decaying all the time. Sometime, when life has departed, the body will quickly deteriorate because it is dead. Now God comes into this situation with the power to raise the dead and He demonstrated this in Jesus of Nazareth, who demonstrated it in His life. He died in this world as other men died. On that particular day two other men died with Him – one on each side of Him, then he was raised from the dead to demonstrate the fact that God could raise the dead. This was done in several different ways. First, the grave was found – open and empty. That is recorded in Luke 24:1-8 and Matthew 28:1-8; in Mark 16:1-8 and John 20:1-2. Luke tells it very simply: he mentions that there were two men there in shining garments who told the people who came to see the empty grave "He is not here but is risen." Matthew tells of an earthquake, and with it the angel of the Lord rolled back the stone and they said to the women, "He is not here but is risen." In Mark we are told that when the women came to the grave they said, "Who shall roll away the stone?" They found the stone gone and the messenger – the angel – told them, "Tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you into Galilee." And in John we have the story of Mary Magdalene. She came back and told the disciples, "They have taken away the Lord," and indicated that she did not know where they had put Him. This is the story and the whole world needs to face the fact that grave was found empty after the Lord had been in there.

The next thing we notice is that the women brought the news to the disciples and this is also reported in all of the Gospels. We turn to John 20, beginning at verse 11 and read:

But Mary stood without at the sepulcher weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulcher, and seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir if thou have borne hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

These must have been stirring moments. How could the disciples possibly grasp this whole truth? We read that Peter and John went to the grave to check the report (Luke and John both tell about this). John reached the grave first and looked in but he did not go into the grave. Peter went in and he saw that the garments were there and also the napkin folded that had been about His head. I have often wondered why that was recorded in Scripture. He was actually there in physical being and He could take the napkin, fold it and put it aside. And He did. We learn that the risen Lord Jesus – the risen Jesus of Nazareth – appeared on the road to Emmaus to two of the disciples. It is recorded in Luke 24, beginning at verse 13:

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three-score furlongs. And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

It has been said that Luke 24 is considered one of the most important portions of Scripture, for obvious reasons, and I suggest that you read it carefully again to get the full import of our Lord's message to those two disciples. In verses 36-49 we read:

And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?

They thought He was a ghost. It was shocking to see that person alive whom they had seen die on the cross. He did this to impress upon their minds that it was literally true that He was raised from the dead. He continued, "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered (you see, they were greatly impressed, but they could still have doubted it) "he saith unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of a honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them." That was absolute proof that was a physical body.

Remember, a doctor wrote this. And as we read in the last verses of Luke 24 and in John 21:21-25, the risen Jesus of Nazareth showed Himself to be alive by many infallible proofs. The book of Acts tells us that He showed Himself to be alive over a period of forty days. All of that impresses upon our minds that by the power of God a person can be raised from the natural into the spiritual. It means that no matter how weak we may be, or how faulty we may be, by the grace of God we are born again in Christ Jesus and there will be in us something new and permanent that will be from God Himself.

The new birth will bring us into fellowship with God by the power of God. For God can raise the dead – even me, even you.

Chapter 18

Do you realize how important it is that a believer should know that Jesus is alive?

One aspect of the Gospel that I feel is commonly overlooked is that Christ Jesus is alive. What He now looks like is unknown and unimportant. I have in mind that anybody who has burdens to bear would be so much helped to remember that the Lord Jesus is actually alive, and any person who has been hurt should remember that He is touched with all the feelings of our infirmities now. He knows these things now because He is more alive than we are, and He is with us.

When Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead He took His disciples apart and said, in the concluding verses of Luke 24:

And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

That is the way Luke ends his Gospel. Now let us read a few verses, beginning at verse 9, in the first chapter of Acts:

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

Notice that that is just the way it reads: they saw Him go. They were watching. It was broad daylight:

And while they looked steadfastly up toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey.

I am told that the Greek word translated gazing could very well be translated *gaping* – looking with open mouth. Long after I had begun preaching the Gospel and even after I had become a professor at the seminary, it came to me with a very sharp emphasis a certain question: why did Jesus of Nazareth arrange that He should be taken up into heaven in full view of all the company of the disciples? We know that when He was transformed on the Mount of Transfiguration there were only three men with Him – Peter, James and John. And again, if He had just wanted to go to heaven during all of those hours when He was out of their sight, He could have gone. The very obvious reason must be that He wanted them to know for sure that He was actually in heavenly places. I emphasize it because that is true for us. Nothing has been changed. He is just as real in the presence of God now as He was really in the presence of God then.

I emphasize this because I am interested in the person who has problems, who has a burden to bear, a sorrow to endure – a person who is in trouble. Keep in mind He, the living Lord, is touched with all the feelings of our infirmities. I want to point out some other things that Jesus of Nazareth showed his disciples. When thinking about the ascension we receive, as it were, an extra blessing, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." In Acts 1:8 something further is said:

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

He made this comment to all of them. He would not add to what they already had in mind but He would make everything very real and effective for them and for other people. In the second chapter of Acts, verse 1, we read, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." I suspect perhaps many of you already know that speaking of the day of Pentecost fully

coming – meaning when the period which is called Pentecost in the Bible actually took place, it meant there were fifty days from the time the first fruits were offered before God to when the harvest was brought in – the fullness of the harvest. And you might have in mind that it was fifty days from the time that Jesus of Nazareth was raised from the dead to the time when the Holy Spirit came upon all the disciples, who were there, seated in one place, and suddenly a sound as of a mighty rushing wind filled the place where they were. It was the sound that filled it, not the wind. And "cloven tongues like as of fire" (not tongues of fire, but like as of fire) sat upon each of them. And they all began to speak of the wonderful works of God in the various languages of those who were present.

In Acts 3:6 we read how, when Peter and John met the lame man at the Beautiful Gate, Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." We can say that the risen Lord actually healed that lame man through Peter. That is the way it is done. Peter made the following comment in Acts 4:10:

Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole.

Remember that the Lord Jesus is now in the presence of God and He has been glorified and made both Lord and Christ. This is the time He really enters into the function that is called Christ, when He is King of Kings and Lord of all. In chapter 7, verse 55, we have the testimony of Stephen, the deacon:

But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

The risen Lord was seen in heaven by Stephen and in chapter 9 you will find that the risen Lord was seen by Saul the Pharisee on the Damascus road. And there is one further word in Acts 9:34, where we find the risen Lord healed the man who had been ill for eight years through Peter.

In other words, the living Lord is working even now and I hope one thing lingers in your hearts and minds: Jesus of Nazareth is alive. You can turn to Him and lie is minded to be with you and to help you.

Chapter 19

Do you realize that the spreading of the Gospel depends upon the testimony of born again Spirit-filled believers?

The grace of God described in the Gospel needs to be believed to be received. It is never pushed on anyone. We are reminded of this by the Apostle Paul in Romans 10:13:

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?

Just anybody telling the Gospel story is not enough; it needs to be someone who has a mission for it. God's hands need to be in it. Remember the familiar passage that records the words of the Lord Himself (Matthew 28:19-20):

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and 10, I am with you, always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The Word is to be spread but it is to be done by people who belong to the Lord. In John 20:21 the Lord Jesus told His disciples, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Then again in Acts 1:8:

Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Thus it becomes clear that when the Lord Jesus Christ left this world He committed evangelism – telling the Gospel story – to His believers. I think one statement in Scripture that many Christian people have failed to really look at is where the Lord says, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." It seems almost too much to understand that the welfare, even the spiritual destiny of other people, should be dependent upon anyone of us. But that is the way it is.

Have you ever considered that you are here because of your parents? It is equally true that for those who come to know the Lord and belong to Him, they will be there because somebody brought them the message. That is the way it is done. Why it is done that way, I don't know. One cannot help but feel that if it had been given to the angels to do, maybe it would have been done well. Imagine turning over to His followers, as weak and wayward as they proved to be, this great task "Go ye into all the world and teach all nations." But He prepared His disciples for their mission and this is what we want to think about now.

The first thing that happened was their conversion and in that connection I think the conversion of the Apostle Paul is probably as clear an example of what the Lord Jesus does as anything that we have. And he understood it that way. Look at I Timothy 1:16:

Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Paul understood his own experience to be, as it were, a pattern for all others. And when we think about how Paul was met on the Damascus Road by the living Lord, let me point out just a few simple things the like of which could happen with every other believer. He saw Jesus Christ personally. And you come to deal with Him personally. And then, the Apostle Paul asked "Who art thou, Lord? What wilt thou have me to do?" These are the elements that are to be found in conversion everywhere.

First of all, the Person of Jesus Christ and then "what do you want me to do?" The second thing which He did was to bring them to conviction and if you turn to the first three verses of Acts you will read how

the Lord Jesus, in the space of forty days after He was raised from the dead, after He had appeared to them, "by many infallible proofs showed them that He was really alive, bring to them conviction. For over a month, from day to day, they had personal contact with the living Lord giving them this conviction: Jesus is alive, and this is basic for the witnesses of the Gospel. There was then given to them their commission that we read about in Acts 1:7, 8, ". . . and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

In the fourth place there was correction. After they had received the conviction that Jesus was alive and had seen Him ascend into heaven, where He was interceding on their behalf and they had received from Him also the commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, they were together and they received a correction. One of the apostles was missing and his place had to be filled; whatever was wrong about their arrangement needed to be made right, and this is true to this day. If you undertake any responsibility for Him, don't be surprised if, in your own heart and mind, you will feel there is some change you ought to make. And don't let anybody talk you out of it. Someone may ask, "If I go to serve the Lord, do I have to be any different?" Let me just say: if you serve the Lord you *will* be different.

The fifth thing I want to bring to your attention is that under God's guidance and by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, they were brought into a communion as we read in Acts 2:1-4. They were with each other and they were with the Lord. Then while they were there we remember the experience of Pentecost: suddenly a sound as of a mighty rushing wind and then there were the cloven tongues, like as of fire, that sat upon each of them. But the experience was that the Holy Spirit came to be in them and the Holy Spirit's function was, as the Lord Jesus Himself had told them, to take the things of Christ and show them unto others. You can think of them being consecrated because the incoming of the Holy Spirit definitely sets them aside as unto the Lord.

Have you realized what preparation this was for those who would witness? You may be called upon to teach a Sunday School class and you will feel willing to want to do everything you can. You may feel that you are not worthy but still you must feel you will do anything you can. You hate to say no but let me just say something to you: certainly it is open to you. Certainly you could do that kind of work but let me suggest that you do not do that kind of work as you are as a human being. For that you need to have spiritual preparation and personal dealings with the Lord Jesus Christ. And if there is something that is not as it should be in your life, have it corrected. It is very important – this work that you will do. And then, have communion with other believers. Be in fellowship with others – do not work alone. And finally, accept from God Himself the presence of the Holy Spirit in your heart. In this way you will be prepared to be a witness unto Him.

Chapter 20

Do you realize that the living Lord is now interceding for His own?

The Gospel is about the work of the Son of God. He came into the world incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, to seek and to save the lost. Man was lost in his sins; Jesus of Nazareth died as a sacrifice acceptable to God. And so it was set forth as basic, "whosoever believeth in Him shall never die." He rose from the dead in the newness of life to make regeneration possible. Because He rose from the dead, we can be free from sin. Sin will be around and in us but sin cannot control us because we are in Him. He sent forth the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers to show the things of Christ making it possible for the believer to live with Christ in you, the hope of glory. Thus the believer is inwardly blessed; God working in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. The believer now has two natures: the flesh, which he came by naturally, and the spirit, which he came by through Christ when he was born again. Because of the flesh, the believer may err, he may falter, he may sin, he may be weak but now we come to a wonderful truth. We read in I John 2:1, 2:

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

That is a remarkable statement and what I want to bring to our hearts and minds just now is this: there is a living Being right now in the presence of God, interceding on our behalf. The ministry of Jesus Christ goes on now. We read in Acts 1:1, 2:

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which he was taken up.

I want you to feel that word *began* because He continued it afterwards. While He was here on earth He began to do and to teach the Gospel of God; He continues that now through His disciples. In Acts 2:32-36 we read:

This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom he have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

During His life on earth He began to do and to teach and continues that now in and through those who believe in Him. In the case of the Apostle Paul, when he was still Saul the Pharisee, we read this in Acts 9:3-7, the occasion when he was accosted by the Lord Jesus:

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

When you read that is it possible for you in your own heart to sense the fact that it actually happened. There is right now in the presence of God a living Being who has His eye on you and who will call you to serve Him. We will not all be called to the same kind of service that Saul was called to but we will have our mission pointed out to us from Him. In the same chapter, verses 15 and 16, we read:

But the Lord said unto him (speaking to Ananias), Go thy way: for he (speaking of Saul the Pharisee) is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: for I will show him how great things we must suffer for my name's sake.

The living Lord may call a person to serve. There is something else wonderfully true and this is set before us in Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." If you are a believer, you are able every day to live to remember there is in the presence of God a living Lord always ready to intercede for you.

You will remember a certain incident before He passed out of this world, how the Lord Jesus was talking to His disciples and He especially directed a word to Peter. We find it in Luke 22:31-33:

And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

The Lord Jesus knows exactly the situation you are in; He knows exactly what you are going to face. And He knows the problems that will come up and the burdens you will have and He prays that your faith should not fail. He is always in the presence of God on your behalf. There is an important statement in Colossians 1:27, and in this case the Apostle Paul was writing to believers:

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The living person of the Lord Jesus Christ is actually operating in you. It is not just an idea; He is a person and He is with you. The Lord is operating within the believer who is trusting in Him and if that believer is yielding to the Holy Spirit then the Lord is working in him. You do not have to bear burdens alone. No given situation can happen that He does not know about; He knows before it happens and He intercedes on your behalf before it happens, as He did with Peter. He knew Peter would face serious testings and He prayed for him that his faith should not fail. And so it will be with you.

The Apostle Paul expressed all of this so well in Gal. 2:20:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Now in everything that I have written I hope that I have kept before us constantly the thought: it is God; it is the Lord working in you to will and to do of His good pleasure. Remember, this is not something you have to do. The fact is that the living Lord Jesus Christ is right now in the presence of God – praying for you. And by His Holy Spirit is actually in you and is operative, so that you will be helped as you live by the presence and power of the Lord Jesus Christ.