

He that hearkeneth unto counsel
is wise. *Proverbs xii, 15.*

Victory

The Features of
the Bride

A Threefold Cord

Plainly

The counsel of the Lord, that
shall stand. *Proverbs xix, 21.*

VICTORY

Scriptures read:—1 Corinthians 15: 57; 1 John 5: 4-5; Habakkuk 3: 17-19; Judges 4: 4-6.

I have before me, dear brethren, to speak about victory, and you will observe in the first passage read that God gives it to *us*, the “*us*” obviously having reference to those having faith, for spiritual things are given only to such. God is bountiful in material things and provides for all, even although there may not be faith, for He has never left Himself without witness among men, giving rain, as we are told, and fruitful seasons, filling men’s hearts with food and gladness. Indeed, as the passage goes on to say: “In Him we (meaning all mankind) live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17: 28). But when it comes to spiritual things the dispensation of God is said to be in faith. The gospel is addressed to those who have faith, as it is said, on the principle of faith to faith; it is an administration. The Lord Jesus Christ, ere going up to heaven, after He rose from the dead, moved in and out amongst His people for forty days, and in that way would impress them with what is spiritual, so that on going on high, being made both Lord and Christ, He administered what was spiritual. And so Peter says, referring to the gift of the Spirit which was there to be observed: “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see

and hear" (Acts 2: 33). But He shed His blood for those who had faith. He, as shed forth thus, was available to man, but only on the principle of faith. So that what God gives spiritually, as I said, has reference to those who have faith, and when the apostle here says: "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory," the "us" refers to those who have faith. As, having faith, we believe what is presented to us on the principle of faith. And so, in this chapter, the apostle says at the outset that the gospel which he preached to the Corinthians was that "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." These facts were presented to them on the principle of faith, and having received them (if they did, indeed) they came within the "us," to whom God is pleased to give the victory. And, I may add, so that there may be no misunderstanding as to what this victory implies, that it does not refer to any material success or prosperity in this world. It refers to what the chapter speaks of; it refers to resurrection, and you will observe that he does not say: "He *shall* give it to us," but He "*giveth* us the victory." In other words it is a present thing, which God intends should be by faith in the possession of our souls; He *gives* it to us, and He gives it to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the Lord, as risen, remained with His own forty days before He ascended, and, as you will remember, He appeared, according to this chapter, on six different occasions; and I submit to you that on each of these occasions, there would be conveyed the sense of victory. First, He appeared to Cephas. In the Gospel of Luke we are told He appeared to Simon, doubtless to reassure

the heart of His erring disciple, but the Spirit of God has not that in view in this passage, and so He mentions Simon's spiritual name. We have to understand what it is, beloved, to have spiritual names, because it is first that which is natural and afterwards that which is spiritual. We have to understand how we come under the eye of the Lord, the last Adam who is a quickening Spirit. If He has to do with us He quickens us; He quickens us in relation to His own perfect wisdom as to the place we are to occupy in that spiritual world which He came to effectuate. So that Simon is referred to here according to his spiritual name. If the last quickening involves certain traits which no one else has. Each one differs, as this passage tells us: "Star differs from star in glory." Each one has his own living characteristics, spiritual characteristics, and, as all come under the eye of the Last Adam, He sees these and names the person accordingly. We shall all appear, therefore, in the spiritual realm according to the names which the Last Adam confers. And so, as He appears to Cephas, there would be in the heart of Cephas a sense of victory. He would be stimulated in the sense of victory as to what he was and the place he was to occupy in the divine structure, for his name signifies "a stone."

And then He appears to the twelve, for they were to administer. There was to be here an administrative company appointed by the Lord, and they had been appointed, and as appointed He appears to them. The appearance would convey to them a sense of victory, for the One whom they were to represent in their administration was Himself supremely victorious; He was out of death. Their administration should be not

of material things, but spiritual things, and they would be impressed by the appearance of Christ to them as the twelve, with the sense of victory: that they had to do with a spiritual Person, One who had been into death, and was now out of it. They would be impressed with victory, and would carry on the administration in the sense of victory; they would be above the least taint of corruption. We know how administrators after the flesh are exposed to corruption, but these would be set up in their souls in complete superiority in the sense of victory that the Lord Jesus Christ would accord to them as appearing to them.

Then it is said that He appeared to the five hundred brethren at once; and here again there would be the conveyance to their souls of victory, for how should we maintain the truth involved in the term "brethren," except as in victory? We should soon drop to the level of current religion around us unless we are in the sense of victory. It was as risen from the dead that the Lord Jesus Christ sent the message to His brethren. He says: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God" (John 20: 17). "I ascend" He says, and how that would elevate their hearts far above this world, and the earth, and even the garden in which Magdalene had met Him. They were to be linked up with Him as ascended into heaven. He came in afterwards—on what particular date I cannot tell—but there were five hundred of them together at the one time—a remarkable occasion—and He appeared to them. Some of them, says the apostle, remained until that day. How those who remained, as moving about among the later converts would convey to those converts the

dignity of "brethren"! The term has been dragged down in our own times to the current religions in the world, brethren being classified among all the religions of town or country; but it was never so intended. The Lord's thought was that it should be elevated—that we should remain in obscurity outside the range of man's cognisance. And so, these five hundred, as they moved about among the later converts, would impress upon them the spiritual dignity involved in the term, "brethren."

And then He appeared to James, it says. We have in one instance His appearing to five hundred at once, and then again to one man. He would convey to James the sense of victory. Like some of David's mighty men of old, he, doubtless, had to confront many at one time, but God would give him the victory. I have no doubt that we should read the history of David's men in the light of this, for, as the Lord would appear to an individual, He would convey to him that one man could chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight; as Samson says: "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men" (Judges 15: 16). A man who has had an appearing from the Lord is fortified in his soul with a sense of victory. It was not for Himself alone that He won the victory; that victory is to pervade every one of us! We are to be set up here in the sense of it.

Then He appeared to "all the apostles," as if to suggest to us that, if the authority of the Lord be called to question—as, alas, it is—the sense of victory which He conveys to those who represent Him in the world enables them to maintain it. To put it in simple language: "He that hath my com-

mandments, and keepeth them; he it is that loveth me" (John 14: 21). You maintain the will of God in your own path, and, as far as you can, in the meeting in which you are, at all costs. Not one iota of divine authority must be surrendered. His appearing to all the apostles has relation to His authority. They represented Him. His presence would impress them in this connection. They would be reminded of the spirit in which His authority should be maintained.

Paul said He appeared unto all these; then he adds: "And last of all He was seen of me," as one, we may say, who was intended to be a personal representative of His in this world; one who loved the Lord in a peculiar way. He says: "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Paul loved the assembly, too, as he says: "I will fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the assembly" (Col. 1: 24). How the beloved apostle Paul would be impressed with the victory of Christ as He appeared to him!

Well now, having said so much, I turn to the passage in John's epistle, because it shows you how we come into this. First he says: "All that has been begotten of God gets the victory over the world"—nothing else! You may study the Scriptures, and the writings that bear on the Scriptures, and acquire knowledge and ability to speak, but all these suffice not for the victory over the world. It is all that is begotten of God that gets the victory. And then again, he says: "This is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world, even our faith." This is not only faith in your soul; it includes, I think, the system of truth unfolded in the Lord Jesus Christ—the *whole* of it—our

faith. On every hand the truth is being given up and abandoned; who are abandoning it? Those who are not born of God, for those who are born of God get the victory, and they *hold* the truth. Later on we are told "the Spirit is the truth." Christ is the truth—"I am the way, the truth, and the life." That is objective. He presents the whole truth of God objectively, but in the epistle the Spirit is the truth, suggesting that the Holy Spirit down here, in the believers, maintains the truth in complete correspondence with Christ in heaven; an immense thought! Can it ever fall to the ground? Never! "This is the victory which has gotten the victory over the world, even our faith." It was held in the souls of believers. The truth was never intended to be maintained by catechism or "articles of religion." That cannot be called faith. The word suggests that things were held livingly in men's souls, and by the Spirit the truth was held in all its parts, as John wrote. And it was supremely above the world; it brought down the world, as at Ephesus; the books were burned.

I wish to convey to the young ones here what an immense thing we have, as we lay hold of the truth by the Spirit. "Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." I have already anticipated this: "Our faith" involves every Christian — the unity of the faith — and wherever it is held in faith — that is, livingly, in a man's soul—there is victory. But then there is the individual thought: "Who is *he* that overcometh the world, but *he* that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." The word, "overcometh" here is victory; "he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God" has it.

I commend, dear brethren, the importance

of believing that Jesus is the Son of God. John presents Him in his gospel, and Paul preached Him as the Son of God. According to the Scriptures Paul was the first to preach that Jesus was the Son of God; you can understand it, for he had already the appearing. "Last of all He appeared to me," Paul said. "God," he says, "was pleased to reveal His Son in me, that I may announce Him as glad tidings among the nations" (Gal. 1: 16). And so the preaching that has come to us Gentiles is that: the preaching of the Son of God.

As it is individual here one would raise the question with everyone present—the question the Lord raised with the man that had been blind: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" You see, John contemplates in his gospel that there are believers, *and* believers. He contemplates that many should come under the head of believers, or disciples, and yet not be believers in the Son of God. Indeed, the man in the 9th chapter of John had already been a believer. He had witnessed for Christ, and, on account of his witness, had been cast out of the synagogue, and yet the Lord raises the question: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" You see there is a point we have to reach experimentally, when we believe on the Son of God. And so the man says to the Lord: "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on Him?" The Lord replies: "Thou hast both seen Him, and He it is that talketh with thee," and he says: "Lord, I believe." He is already outside the world, cast out; but I doubt that he had yet overcome it. The religious world had taken the initiative, and cast him out, but he would meet the world in other forms later, and he needed preparation for this. So the Lord finds him, and he believes on the Son of God. What does

that mean?—another world; the light of the Son of God in another world gives me the victory over the present one. So, I would say to the young ones here, to consider what you have come into as having believed on Christ. It means another world: a world the Son of God has set up, and you have part in it; it is all before you. He says: "Me and thee," and He would convey to your soul that it is just Himself and yourself; that is, He links you up with Himself, and you are His for ever. And the world? You disdain it! What has it got for you? Nothing! Paul said the world was crucified unto him, and he unto the world. He says: "God forbid that I should boast, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6: 14).

Now, I just wanted to point out in the two passages I read in the Old Testament how that the Old Testament confirms, and, indeed, enlarges on the New. It gives us illustrations, and so, in Habakkuk, you have a victor. If you go through his prophecy, you will see, at one time he was very despondent; things were not going well, and he is an example of most of us. We all have our despondent times, up to a point. I often think that the journey of young Christians is, so to speak, undulating—up and down—and so it was with Habakkuk, until he arrived at the apprehension of what he speaks of: *high places*. He begins with variable notes, but he ends with a stringed instrument; I think it is the 15th, 1st Corinthians. The choir, I think, is in view of these chapters, beginning with the 10th, and when you come to the great truth of resurrection the strings are tightened up, the flesh is disallowed, and you apprehend the Man out of

death; you are in victory. And so Habakkuk says: "Unto the chief musician on my stringed instruments." Whatever happened to the vines or to the figs, or to the herds, or to the flocks, affected him not now. His business affairs might go against him, his family affairs, or what not, but now he would rejoice—"I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation." What is proposed in the gospel is outside of all these material things, and, as apprehended, makes you independent of them. Not that you do not feel things, but you are not dragged down by them; you walk in your high places. You see it is when God gives you the victory, and you are in it consciously, that the high places are yours. The Lord Jesus walked on the high places for forty days before He ascended so that His own might see what victory He had gained. The world saw Him not—it was outside of this world—but His disciples saw Him; He showed Himself unto them alive. He walked on His high places, but now the believer walks on his. He walks independently of adverse circumstances, as in the light of victory, in the light of Christ risen from the dead. God gives you "hind's feet"; you are above the pressure of this world, and you walk on the high places, and God gets His portion from you. I would that every one of us could use this possessive case, as indicating that we have entered on the high places trodden by the Lord Jesus Christ during those forty days. As the Lord took Peter by the hand, so He would take every one of us, so that we might walk with Him on our high places.

In Deborah there is an instance of one who has the victory in its bearing on the testimony here, because, after all, that is what God has in view in leaving us down here.

He could easily take us to heaven, but His thought is to set us up in complete independence of this world on our high places, so that we might be here in superiority to the world, and to present the gospel, the testimony, to it. It is only in the good of the thing that I can commend it to others; it is not a system of doctrines or articles; it is a thing I have got. I am walking on my high places, and can impress others that the thing is worth having.

Well, now, Deborah judged Israel in those days, and they were dark days. She says: "The roads were unused, and the travellers on highways went by crooked paths. The villages ceased in Israel, ceased until that I, Deborah, arose." (Judges 5: 6-7.) But how did she arise? "She dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Beth-el, in Mount Ephraim." You see, she had a palm tree—"the palm tree of Deborah"—it was her's, the token of personal victory. How can I be a judge of any, unless I am personally victorious? How can I influence others aright, unless I am spiritually victorious? Deborah was victorious, as she dwelt under her own palm tree. As the Israelites came to her for judgment, they would be impressed with that well-known symbol of victory. They did not need to carry a bribe with them to obtain her favor, as she needed no bribe; you could not corrupt her, for she was beyond it. She dwelt under her own palm tree, between Ramah and Beth-el. You see, she is in good surroundings, with her own palm tree over her. And, so, any one of us, who is in these circumstances, can influence the people of God aright.

They come up to Deborah for judgment. And, so, one who is personally victorious is

sure to have a place among the people of God. They respect you, and come to you. What an advantage to come to one who is personally victorious! What an advantage to the saints to have one who lives near to God, and to whom they can come for advice! It is on this ground that eldership stands. How can one rule in the House of God, unless he rules himself and his own house. As he rules himself and his own house, he is sitting under the palm tree of spiritual victory; he is beyond personal considerations, and is thinking of the welfare of the saints—only that—and the saints know it, and they come to him.

So they come to Deborah, and she sends for Barak, and says: "Hath not Jehovah commanded?" I only want to say that you see that one who is personally victorious is now concerned about the will of God. It is not a question of my will, or my judgment, although the saints respect it, as they did Deborah's, but her word to Barak was this: "Hath not Jehovah commanded?" Victory in this sense is always marked by respect for the Lord's commandments, and that is what an elder would insist on, and what is of most importance to be insisted upon; for, everywhere, men are asserting their own wills, whereas, one that is victorious spiritually considers for God. As the Lord said: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." (John 14: 21.) And, again: "Hereby know we that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep His commandments." (1 John 5: 2.) The truly victorious person insists on the Lord's commandments.

Well, dear brethren, that is what I had on my mind to-night, and I hope the Lord will bring the thought home to each of us. He intends that we should each be in victory,

as, otherwise, we shall not be available in the testimony.

I believe He is giving victory; I believe that God is graciously giving victory to the assembly, maybe in a small way outwardly, but, nevertheless, really, as in the case of Samson. There was not very much to honor Samson in his death, but he slew more in his death than in his life. He had his greatest victory in the end; what was the secret of it? His hair had begun to grow; it had been shaven, but now there was evidence of life—thus the victory at the end.

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Perth, W.A.

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THE FEATURES OF THE BRIDE

Song of Solomon III.: 6; VI.: 10; VIII.: 5.

I think, dear brethren, that the Lord is making us to feel distinctly at the present moment that the great work of the Spirit of God on earth to-day is to secure here, in view of the Lord's return, that which will answer to His affections. So that one of the last words in Scripture—in the last chapter of the Revelation, it says: "The Spirit and the bride say 'Come'." That is to say, the Lord is able at the end to take account of the Spirit of God's activities in producing a vessel here on earth that prefers Christ to everything. I think that is one of the great features of a bride. She confesses by her position that she has left father and mother, brothers and sisters, home and all that was hers; that she has chosen another in preference to all, and the Spirit of God, dear brethren, I am sure, is working still that there should be in our hearts that true and living response to Christ that cherishes Him above everything. One desires that we should be in accord with that. You remember in the prophet, Zechariah, how the estimate that was given for Christ was rejected. You remember, perhaps, how he says prophetically of the Lord Jesus when He was here: "If ye think good, give me my price; and, if not, forbear." And it says: "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver." Then the word goes: "Cast it unto the potter; a goodly price that I was prised of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the

Lord" (Zech. 11: 12, 13). The potter undoubtedly refers to the Spirit of God, the One by whom divine activities have gone on from the outset. The potter's attention is called to the world's estimate of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Cast it to the potter in the house of the Lord." The potter's attention is called to those thirty pieces of silver as indicating that the potter would at once begin to form a vessel that would appreciate Christ at His true value, and how blessed to see at the end the Spirit and the bride. The potter in that way identifies himself with His own work. He says, here is a vessel that prefers Christ to everything on earth. That is the terminus of the Spirit's work here. I would like to use, with the Lord's help, these three Scriptures to encourage us to be concerned that we should be marked by the features of the bride. The word coming from the mouth of the Lord Jesus prophetically says three times: "Who is this?" He would identify one that He sees. He would identify her by her features, not by her name, not by any name that she gives herself, not by what she says, but by what she is. He describes her in the features which mark her, and he says: "Who is this?" He gives the answer Himself. He says: "My sister, My spouse." That is to say; in the description He gives of one of whom the question is raised, "Who is this?" He gives us the features of that which marks the Assembly, —His body and His bride. What comes out so blessedly in that connection is that He sees in her that which is descriptive of Himself. As it says of the woman, she was taken out of the man. There was nothing in the woman. but what first came out of the man. And so there is nothing in the church, according to God, which the

Lord takes account of as forming His bride but that which was first in Himself. It seems as if the Lord Himself delights to be recognised by His features. How this was seen when He was here, when Mary stood at the sepulchre, weeping, and someone drew near to her, and she supposed it was the gardener. She did not recognise the Lord. He says to her: "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith to Him: "Sir, if thou hast borne Him 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" (John 20: 15, 16). She recognised Him, not by any name, but there was something in His word. She recognised Him by that which marked Him when He said: "Mary!" There was something in that word which opened her eyes, so that she could identify Him. And so it was afterwards when the Lord journeyed with those two to Emmaus, and they constrained Him to go in with them. "And their eyes were holden that they should not know Him." But as He brake the bread, and gave thanks, they recognised Him, not by anything that was physical, nor by any name that was attached to Him in a literal sense, but they said: "It is the Lord; no one acts like Him." "And they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight." You remember the scene in the 21st chapter of John. The disciples went fishing, and that night they caught nothing. In the morning Jesus stood upon the sea shore, but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them: "Children, have ye any meat?" They answered Him: "No." And He said unto them: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find."

They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. John says: "It is the Lord." He knew Him at once by His features, by His activities, by that which He did. He identified the Lord. That is how the Lord wants to know us. Who is this? He wants to know us by the expression of His own blessed features in His people here. He can identify us as His sister, His spouse.

Now the first question that is raised is: "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?" That is one great feature the Lord would see in His people. He does see it in measure, but He would see more of it. "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness?" That is to say, He sees one on earth (I use the word "one" in a collective sense)—there is one whose object is above, whose heart is set upon Himself, because He has gone up far above all heavens, and He sees on earth a vessel which is moving in its affections towards Himself, as He did towards God when He was here. At the end of His path, it is said, "knowing . . . that He came from God and went to God, He took a towel, and girded Himself." "Knowing that He went to God," God was the whole object of His life. And so in the church, the Lord would see a vessel here whose object, whose affection is in heaven—"we see Jesus crowned with glory and honor"—whose heart is set upon Christ in heaven—whose object to-day is not in this world. So he says: "Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke." How important that is. That is another feature. He sees her "like pillars of smoke." The smoke has come consequent upon the fire. The fire, dear brethren, represents the presence of God with us in the wilderness, that in our wilderness life, jour-

neying through the wilderness, we have God with us. The apostle says: "Our God," not only Israel's God, "*Our* God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12: 29). God is with us in that character, so that all that is unsuitable to Him is judged. The Lord would look down upon His people as marked by self-judgment. There is evidence of that in the smoke. One thanks God continually that, in the Spirit of God, He has given us capacity to judge ourselves. Think what it would be, if there was no capacity to judge that which is unsuitable to God; but the Spirit came upon everyone of the believers at the outset as cloven tongues of fire. That is the bearing of the fire there. The Spirit of God rests upon a believer in order that he might have the power to judge evil and refuse it. Unconverted men go on with what is unsuitable to God, and ignore it, but the Spirit of God as fire is with His people, so that there might be continuous self-judgment. With the Lord Jesus Christ personally that was not necessary. The Spirit came upon Him as a dove, and abode upon Him. No need for fire there. In that wonderful, blessed Person in manhood there was no need for fire, because there was nothing to consume. A dove is a symbol of complacency, rest and peace. That is how the Spirit came upon Jesus. But upon us, He comes as cloven tongues of fire, indicating God has given us in the Spirit the power to be maintained in this world in self-judgment.

"Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense. Myrrh, dear brethren, as we know, suggests love that is prepared to suffer. As the Lord looks down upon His people, He would see love that would suffer. How perfectly that came out in Him. Indeed, He is called in this book, the Song of Solomon, a mountain

of myrrh, suggesting what is great, what is immense on the line of suffering love. How perfectly the Lord expresses it. When we think of it towards God; how He was prepared to suffer. He says, speaking of His life. "I lay it down of Myself, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father" (John 10: 18). He received commandment to lay His life down. He obeyed it, in suffering love. Then towards His own, "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13: 1.). The very night in which He was betrayed He took bread and said: "Take, eat; this is My Body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup"—emblems of love that would suffer for us. And then towards us individually, think of the love that was wrapped up in the look on Peter. Peter with oaths and curses, denied that he knew the Lord, and Jesus looked upon him, and Peter went out, and wept bitterly. Behind that look was the love, the myrrh, that would suffer for Peter. As Peter says: "Christ once suffered for us." The odor of the mountain of myrrh filled Peter's heart. The Lord would see us perfumed with myrrh, marked by a love prepared to suffer for Him. "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). It is given to us. One feels ashamed how little we know of it, but whether it be in one's spirit or in reproach, the Lord would have us perfumed with myrrh. The apostle accepted the position of a fool in this world for Christ's sake. How delightful that was to the Lord Jesus. Then, also: "Perfumed with frankincense." Frankincense, in Scrip-

ture, is used in connection with the incense that went up from the golden altar. If you turn back to the Old Testament Scriptures you find that one of the contents of the incense that went up to God at the golden altar is spoken of as frankincense. Those prayers that ascend to God at the golden altar carry with them the fragrance of frankincense. The Lord Jesus perfectly expressed that. One thinks of Him in the 11th of John, as he lifted up His eyes to heaven and says: "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me, and I knew that Thou hearest me always." All the prayers of the Lord Jesus were prayers at the golden altar. Most of our prayers are connected with our own needs and weakness, and with what others need, but the prayers at the golden altar stand related to the glory and pleasure of God. That is what goes up as frankincense. David says: "Let my prayer go up to Thee as incense." Prayers at the golden altar are frankincense to the Lord. When He was here, all His prayers were in relation to God's glory. That is what He says in the 11th chapter of John. "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God," and He stands and prays in relation to the glory of God as to that scene, not merely in compassion upon Mary and Martha, though He had that, but he says: "This sickness . . . is for the glory of God." Then, again, in the 17th chapter of John: "Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." More frankincense going up to heaven. The burden of that prayer is: "That thy Son also may glorify Thee." If He is glorified, it is that He may still more glorify the Father. That prayer goes up as frankincense. So, indeed, if we go to Gethsemane, and hear another of His prayers—"Oh, My Father, if

it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26: 39). More frankincense, fragrant and pure, going up to God.

Now the Lord sees in His people the perfume of frankincense; He sees in the church that which is instant in prayer as to the glory of God—that which is for the glory of God. That is the point the frankincense suggests. In the early days of Luke's gospel, Zacharias stood burning incense. He not only offered incense literally, but there was in his heart deep longings that God's glory should be secured in Israel in that day of darkness and apostasy and ruin; and Gabriel came and said: "Thy prayer is heard; thy wife, Elizabeth, shall bear thee a son." That is not what Zacharias prayed for. He had been praying that God's rights should be asserted somehow, and Gabriel says: "John the Baptist shall be the answer to that. He will come in and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and make ready a people prepared for the Lord. Thy prayer is heard." Our prayers offered at the golden altar will be answered, not in the exact way we expect, but John sees in the Revelation the Lord standing at the golden altar to give efficacy to the prayers of all saints at the golden altar. He sees on earth that which is marked by seeking the glory of God, and He smells the perfume of frankincense.

"With all powders of the merchant." Again we are reminded of the Lord Jesus, the true Merchantman, seeking goodly pearls. He brought all the powders with Him. Every single powder He carried with Him to sell them, as He says: "I counsel thee to buy of Me," and so He stands as having all the powders. "All the powders of the merchant" refer to the graces, the excellences of Christ.

All of them. The frankincense is one, seeking the glory of God. The myrrh is another—that love that will suffer anything—but, then, there is all of them. All the powders of the merchant referring to the excellences, the excellences of “Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light.” The word is in the plural. Excellences—seen in Christ here, holiness, righteousness, truth, courage, stability, devotedness, faithfulness, grace, every moral excellency there is. The Lord Jesus brought them. He brought *all* the powders of the merchant, and He looks on His people, and He says: “Perfumed with all the powders of the merchant.” That is, every feature of what is of God He would find amongst His people. He would find holiness amongst them, steadfastness, meekness. How often we think one grace is to be held at the expense of another. But no, it says all the powders are to be found in the church.

Then, passing to the next Scripture, the Lord says: “Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?” One feels that is an important word to us to-day. Literally, we are at the end; literally we are not in the morning, we are in the evening, at the close of the day in the history of the church here; but as He looks on her He says she is in the morning. The Lord Jesus brought in the morning. Zacharias says: “The dayspring from high has visited us.” That is the morning. Everything of God had its beginning in Christ—everything. And the church, according to God, holds on to the beginning. It has no room for the theories of man. It holds on to the morning. It is in accord with the beginning. That which is from the beginning. Everything was in the beginning. “That which is from the beginning.” “If ye hold fast that which is from the beginning.”

That is it, dear brethren, the Lord Jesus is the beginning. He is the morning. The Lord Jesus looks down on His people, and He sees them in accord with the morning. He is the beginning. The truth is to be held as it was at the beginning. It is a great mercy of God to-day that He has recovered so many of His people to what was true at the beginning, not outwardly merely, but in their hearts and minds. So He says: "Who is this that looks forth as the morning?"

Then it says: "Fair as the moon." How fair the moon is. Think of the darkness of the night. Think of the moon coming up, casting its fair light in the darkness. "God made two great lights the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night." Think of the light that rules the night. How perfectly that shone in the Lord Jesus when He was here. Think of the night. When Judas went out it was night. What marks darkness according to God is hatred. How dark was the night of Calvary. Think of the hatred that was there, the darkness that was there. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." Like the darkness of Egypt that could be felt. So the darkness there—it could be felt. The Lord Jesus in the darkness shines fair as the moon, casts His blessed light upon the whole scene fair as the moon. Think of His words in the darkness of Calvary: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." How fair was the moon in that darkness. And so right to the end the light shines in the darkness. The whole life of Jesus here was "fair as the moon." Now the Lord would look upon His people, and see the same light going on. He saw it at the beginning. Think of Stephen, fair as the moon. Think of the moral darkness around Stephen, as they

hurled stones at him, and gnashed upon him with their teeth. "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." "His face shone." He was fair as the moon, casting the light of heaven upon that scene of darkness. And the apostles in Philippi, their feet fast in the stocks; at midnight they sang praises, and the prisoners heard them. At midnight—the light shone fair as the moon. The Lord would have it so now. That the blessed light of Christ which He disseminated in the darkness of this world should still shine in its fairness. Who is this, says the Lord, fair as the moon—clear as the sun?

That brings us to another thought. What marks the sun is that, where the sun shines, there is no darkness. There is no darkness where the sun is. When the Lord Jesus was here that was another feature. There was no darkness where He was. It never existed where He was, personally. How the Lord could stand at the end of His life and say: "I spake openly . . . in secret have I said nothing" (Jno. 18:20). There was nothing hidden in His heart, no element of darkness, nothing to cover up, everything was open. "Altogether what I said unto you." One would commend these words to us. "I ever spake openly: in secret have I said nothing." How often what we say in secret is not in accord with what we say openly. But the Lord could say: "In secret have I said nothing." There was nothing hidden away that had to be uncovered. He was "clear as the sun." The apostle says: "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2). We have no secret motive

whatever. "Clear as the sun." The Lord would look for in His people that every motive, every word, should be in accordance with the sun. Nothing hidden, nothing secret, no dark motives away in the heart unjudged, but clear as the sun.

Then it says: "Terrible as an army with banners." That refers to the Lord's intolerance of that which is evil. He is intolerant, He is terrible when it comes to that which is evil. Think of His word to Peter. Peter says: "Pity Thyself, Lord." The Lord had said He was going to Jerusalem to be rejected—to be crucified. Peter says: "Pity Thyself, Lord; this shall not be to Thee." The Lord says: "Get behind Me, Satan, for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." Terrible as an army with banners. Intolerant of that which is evil. So that principle is to be found amongst God's people. These are the excellences of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. So Peter in the Acts with Ananias and Sapphira. Ananias, having sold a possession and keeping back a part for himself, Sapphira being privy to it, Peter said to Ananias: "Why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?" And, Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and gave up the ghost; and the young men carried him out, and buried him. And Sapphira, coming in, Peter says: "Sold ye the land for so much?" and she said: "Yea, for so much." Then Peter said unto her: "How is it ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out." "Terrible as an army with banners." And, again, when we come to the principle that Simon Magus brought in. He was some great one, and he sought to use

Christianity to keep up his own greatness, and become greater, and he offered Peter money, and said: "Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost" (Acts 8: 19). Peter says "thy money go with thee to destruction." That is the principle. Terrible as an army with banners. The Apostle Paul maintained it. He says to the Corinthians: "Put away that wicked person from amongst yourselves." Put him away. He will not tolerate sin amongst the people of God. That is one feature the Lord would look down and see amongst His people. "Who is this . . . terrible as an army with banners?"

Then we come to the next verse. "Who is this," saith the Lord, "that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" How blessed is that. The Lord sees a vessel moving up out of this scene with its heart in heaven. As the apostle says: "Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3: 2). Where Christ is. So the Lord says: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" Resting, supported by the love of Christ. That is how the church moves out; that is how the church comes up to meet Christ, resting upon His love, not resting on human support, human ability; not collecting all the power and the glory of this world, and attaching it to herself, but resting upon the arm of her beloved—resting upon the affections and power of Christ. That is how He would have the church come up—resting, supported by the love of Christ. Exactly as the Lord Jesus went out. He went out like that. As He went out of this scene, this is what He says: "Preserve me, O God, for in Thee do I put my trust. Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine

Holy One to see corruption. 'Thou wilt show me the path of life' (Psalm 16: 1, 10, 11). See Him going up out of the wilderness leaning upon His beloved, as it were, resting as a blessed, perfect Man upon God. He says: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." He went down actually into the grave resting upon the love of God. He says: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell."

Well, dear brethren, one does desire that, in some measure, these blessed features may be true in us now, that the Lord may identify us as forming part of His church. He says: "I come quickly." These are the features He would see in His people, and, in an anticipative way, these are the features the Lord would have in us as we approach His supper, because that is the meeting place in the meantime until He actually comes. He meets us there, and He would have us come up in these features, come up out of the wilderness as pillars of smoke—"Let a man so examine himself"—coming up in love that is prepared to suffer for Him—coming up seeking the glory of God—coming up with the features of Christ, and holding Him as the beginning—coming up with the light shining still in the darkness of this world, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, terrible as an army with banners, and, above all, resting on His blessed love. May it be the experience of our hearts to be contributive to this. I know it is collective, but it is true collectively, because it is true individually. So the Lord would have each one of us to take it up that He may identify us as forming part of that vessel of which it is said: "The Spirit and the bride say: 'Come'." For His Name's sake.

W.J.H.

Perth, W.A., March, 1926.

A THREEFOLD CORD

“A threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Eccl. 4: 12).

“I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love” (Hosea 11: 4).

Also Numbers 23: 7-10; 24: 5-9; 1 Cor. 6: 9-11; 2 Cor. 1: 18-22.

God is pleased in His goodness to speak to the saints in a very simple way, using things which even a child can understand to illustrate what He speaks of. Our first Scripture says that a *threefold* cord is not quickly broken. Well, it is wonderful: each of the Persons of the Godhead, in perfect unison with each other, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, co-operate for the blessing of God's people. The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. The Son has, in His death, accomplished redemption, and annulled him who had the might of death, and has gone to the right hand of God. The Holy Spirit has come down, and, through the preaching of the glad tidings, men are brought to repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus. God draws us to Jesus, and to Himself, with cords of a MAN, with bands of LOVE. That is how our history with God begins. A Man (the blessed Son of God) has died for us, and is risen again. No charge can be laid against those who believe in Him. God holds them to Himself by a threefold cord which He has thrown around them. This cord cannot be broken. It was woven in the death of His

Son: there those holy bands of love were formed with which God draws us.

When Balaam, hired by Balak, came to curse God's redeemed people, he found that he could only bless them. He found that a threefold cord of righteous grace and holy love surrounded them, and he could not break it. It was not only that he could not curse, but he had to own that God had *blessed* them, and he could not reverse it. God had sanctified, justified, and beautified His people. The Blood of the Lamb and the serpent lifted up, showed, in type, their deliverance from their guilt and from their sinful state, through the death of Christ on the ground of which the Spirit is given. As in Christ, and as in the Spirit, the saints are as beautiful, fragrant, and fruitful trees and plants by the river's side.

The saints at Corinth had been affected by false teachers, which tended to puff up and corrupt them. Paul was greatly grieved. They were the seal of his apostleship in the Lord, and the fruit of 18 months of patient labor. But he does not give them up, but solemnly warns them that the unrighteous do not inherit the Kingdom of God. He knew the saints personally, and they knew him. Through him the grace of God in the gospel had reached their hearts; some of them had been openly ungodly, unclean, and lawless. He reminds them of what grace had done in them and for them. Departing though they were from the simplicity which is in Christ, the apostle could still see the threefold cord of grace around them. We may, alas! change, but God does not. "But ye are washed; but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." What a joy to the apostle's heart, in the midst of his sor-

row, to see these cords of a Man and hands of love still unbroken and unbreakable! As he says in the opening of his letter (chap. 1: v. 9): "*God is faithful, by Whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord,*" and again (chap. 10: 13): "*But God is faithful, Who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able.*" If *we* are unfaithful, it is to our great loss, but our salvation does not depend on our faithfulness, but on God's. "Washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God," is the blessed threefold cord by which God holds His saints to Himself apart from an unclean and lawless world. The "washing" is twofold; first, judicially before God, "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1: 7), so that we can sing: "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood . . . to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen" (Rev. 1: 6); second, the washing of our inward parts by the word applied by the Spirit, so that through grace we are born of *water*, and of the Spirit. This leads to deep repentance, God purifying our hearts by faith. Believing on Jesus sets the heart in relation to Him so that the saint has a Pure and Holy Object before him. We see the woman in the fourth of John cleansed in this way inwardly by the word that Jesus had spoken to her, and she becomes a clean vessel of testimony of His to go to the men of the city. Then, as cleansed, God has sanctified us, set us apart from this world and all its uncleanness for Himself, like Israel they were to dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations. Of course, we have to go *through* the world, but we are no longer of it, but are set apart to God for *His* plea-

sure. How blessed! This, like justification, is not in our own names or strength, but in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Then, thirdly, God has *justified* us. Through the death of Christ He has cleared us from every reproach that attached to us as sinners in *this* world, and has approved of us in Christ for His pure world of glory of which Christ is the Sun.

The apostle's first epistle, written, as we are told (2 Cor. 2: 4) "out of much affliction and anguish of heart, with many tears," was used of God for the recovery of the saints from evil. In the second he is greatly relieved, and seeks to restore their souls by occupying them with the *glory* of the Lord, as he had in his first epistle, occupied them with His death. It is now His glory. The brightest light that could ever shine into our hearts is that of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. God loves threes. He had sent *three* chosen witnesses to preach to the Corinthians the Son of God, Jesus Christ. This they had done, and the Corinthians, many, through grace, believed. He was not yea and nay, but unchangeably "Yea!" All God's promises in Him are yea, and amen for glory to God by us. "Glory" is much in view here. Now follows a lovely threefold cord, not simply to hold us from *this* world, but to firmly hold us to Christ in, as we have already said, the pure world of glory, into which He has entered as Man.

"He has Thy presence entered,
As man in heaven is known;
In Him Thy glory's centred,
In Him Thy purpose shown."

Christ means Anointed. The Christ is the Anointed. Thus we may, in order to show

the connection, in verse 21 of chapter 1 of the second epistle to the Corinthians, read thus: "Now He Which establisheth us with the Anointed, and hath *anointed* us, is God; Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." Anointed, sealed, and the earnest given is the blessed threefold cord here. The Spirit, as the Anointing, firmly attaches us to the Anointed Man in glory. It is similar to the anointing described in Psalm 133, "the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that *went down* to the skirts' of his garments." Yes, it comes *down* to the very hem, thus John, in his first epistle, speaks of the young Christians, whom he terms, "little children," as having received "the anointing," and thus having "an unction from the Holy One" (1 John 1: 20 and 27). Thus God has *established* the apostles with the saints in Christ, the Anointed. It is of all moment to be "stablished," and it is God who "stablisheth" us in Christ. In "sealing" us God has marked us off as being His. He does not seal mere profession. The Lord knoweth them that are His. The Spirit is the seal of God upon us. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are *sealed* unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4: 30). "The Earnest" completes the "cord" of love. The Holy Spirit in our hearts is the blessed earnest of our future glory. So sure as the Spirit has been given, and is in our hearts, so surely shall we be brought into the inheritance undefiled, and that fadeth not away (see 1 Peter 1: 4; Eph. 1: 14; 2 Cor. 5: 5).

May God give us to greatly value His grace, and not receive it in vain. All the Persons of the Godhead have been active in our blessing. Marvellous grace!

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” (2 Cor. 13: 14).

RICHARD WRIGHT.

Melbourne, June, 1926.

PLAINLY

“And if the servant shall *plainly* say: ‘I love my master, my wife, and my children,’ I will not go out free” (Ex. 21: 5).

“The time cometh when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but shall show you *plainly* of the Father” (Jno. 16: 25).

“For they that say such things declare *plainly* that they seek a country” (Heb. 11: 14).

The first Scripture speaks of the way Christ made known His love—we are reminded of it weekly in the Supper. There is no ambiguity about it. The death of Christ was an action on His part that speaks louder than words. He did indeed say, plainly: “I love.”

Then, when the days of His straitening were over—when He had been into death, and come out of it—He was able in His message to His brethren, to speak plainly: “I ascend to My Father—your Father,” and, I take it, that, having ascended to the Father, the Spirit of God is here to continue this plainness of speech. “For through *Him* we both have access by One Spirit to the Father.”

So that, here and now, we have Divine Persons speaking *plainly* to us—of love that expressed itself in death—of love that has its source and being in the heart of the Father.

What about our response? Our third Scripture speaks of some who, in their ways, as well as in their words, spoke plainly. It is manifest with us, so that those who look on

us can see it plainly, that we are seeking a country—that we are not accepting a place, or a rest where Christ is rejected, but are seeking the country where He is now. “In Thy Presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.”

May the plainness of speech that has been, and is being used towards us induce us to respond, and to say, plainly: “We seek a country.”

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