

But God
by A. B. Simpson

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PREFACE

The subject of this little book is the greatest in the world. "I have lost everything," said a sorrowing woman to us once, "everything but God." That one phrase seemed to loom like a whole heaven and eclipse all that she had lost, for if she had God she had lost nothing and had gained everything.

The greatest need of our age and of every age, the greatest need of every human heart, is to know the resources and sufficiency of God.

The apostle paints it like a rainbow across a black and stormy sky. After describing the lost and helpless condition of sinful men, dead in trespasses and sin, children of wrath, subjects of the prince of the powers of the air, he suddenly pauses and utters the two words, "But God," -- "who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins,"

The same apostle again gives us the key to the true life of holiness in his short but striking antithesis, "Not I, but Christ lives in me."

The words stand out as the key to God's providence as we read the story of Peter's imprisonment and his approaching doom, while Herod waited on the morrow to bring him forth to execution. Then follows that simple, significant sentence, "But prayer was made without ceasing unto God for him." And that little "but" was mightier than Herod's wrath or the Pharisee's hate or the bars and bolts of the prison.

Awfully and solemnly the same words loom up again in the parable of the fool who had staked all on this world's wealth and fortune, consulting everybody else about his pleasures and his plans until suddenly, like the cold gates of death and judgment, we come against the terrible sentence, "But God said unto him, you fool."

The pages that follow are an attempt to unfold the all-sufficiency and infinite variety of the resources of God.

But God
by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 1
THE GOD OF ELIJAH

"Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" (2 Kings 2:14.)

Always have I been glad that Elisha did not say, "Where is Elijah?" He had lost his friend and spiritual father, and if ever a sense of bereavement could have been justified, it would have been in the case of Elisha. But his only thought was of the Master and not of the servant. Back of all Elijah's marvelous life and work, he saw only the infinite resources of that God that could be as much to him as He had been to his master. The deep cry of his soul was not for mere human sympathy, but for the manifestation of God's supernatural power and presence. The deep need of Elisha's life was the same deep need that every earnest soul feels today -- the revelation of God, the realization of the supernatural.

Elisha was thinking of all that God had been to Elijah and was longing that He might be the same to him. Oh, that our hearts might have the same longing to know the God of Elijah, the God of Elisha!

THE GOD OF ELIJAH

How much Jehovah had been to the servant whom He had just translated into His glorious presence! Suddenly called from the solitude of Gilead, this strange, lonely man, whose life and character had been molded amid the majesty of nature alone with his God, was immediately projected into the very midst of an age of unparalleled wickedness and a scene of godless culture and luxury. The beautiful capital of the kingdom of Israel was under the dominion of the wicked and worthless Ahab, whose conduct and scepter were wholly under the control of that infamous woman whose name has ever since stood as the symbol of every kind of evil -- Jezebel, the Sidonian idolatress.

Single-handed, the prophet of Gilead was called upon to fight the combined forces of a wicked court, a mercenary and idolatrous priesthood, and a whole people turned from the way of godliness and sunk either in sin or heartless apathy. The situation would have been a desperate one but for the resources of God. With a faith that never faltered but once, the mighty prophet met the emergency and claimed the fulness of his divine equipment. At his word the heavens were sealed and the harvest withered, and at the same word the treasures of rain were opened and the earth gave forth her fruit. The ravens of the wilderness ministered unto him, and the widow's little store of meal and oil was multiplied until the months of famine had gone.

At last all Israel was gathered at his command for a mighty convocation on Mount Carmel, and there he stood alone to vindicate the name of Jehovah against the wicked Jezebel, the angry Ahab, the eight hundred prophets of Baal and the myriads of Israel. The altar was prepared;

the trenches were dug and filled with water; the vain attempts of the heathen prophets were repeated again and again and only met with ignominious failure. Then the final, momentous test was uttered and the power of Omnipotence summoned to send the heavenly fire. Quick as the lightning flash it fell, devouring the sacrifices, licking up the floods that filled the trenches, and blazing before the wondering gaze of the assembled myriads until their intense emotion could hold back no longer, and thundering from that mighty court the shout went up, echoing from Carmel's rocky vales, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God."

Swiftly the victory was followed to its awful finish. The prophets of Baal were slain before the reaction had time to come. Then, bending in agonized prayer before his God, the prophet claimed, as the climax of the whole wondrous scene, the opening heavens and the descending rain. Girding his loins like some great leader, in mighty triumph he ran before the chariot of Ahab to the entrance of the palace gates, while the torrents fell and the nation rejoiced that at length the judgment was passed and the heart of the people turned back again.

But even greater than this was the revelation of Jehovah's power in the life of Elijah. To him it was permitted, before any other messenger of Jehovah, to burst open the very gates of death itself and summon back the departed spirits from the unseen world. When his work was done, a yet higher triumph awaited him; for he himself was raised even beyond the touch of death and was carried to the heavenly world with horses and chariots of fire.

The Lord God of Elijah is the God of life and death, the God of earth and heaven, the God of nations and princes and kings, the God of nature and grace, the God of judgment and retribution, the God who is a consuming fire, mightier than all the forces of nature, of man, of earth, of hell. This mighty God, whose working Elisha had witnessed in the life of his master and whose presence he claimed as he went forth, proved His infinite resources in a life yet more wonderful than even Elijah's had been.

THE GOD OF ELISHA

Elisha's was a larger life than even Elijah's. While the prophet of fire was a more startling figure and, perhaps, reached at times a higher flight than his successor, yet Elisha's sphere took a broader sweep and reached a plane nearer to humanity at large and more helpful to the ordinary man and woman.

We would suggest to our readers to take a single week and every day read a chapter for seven successive days, commencing with the second chapter of Second Kings, reading to the seventh, and then concluding on the seventh day with the thirteenth chapter, which gives the last scenes in his closing life. Such a review will bring God nearer to our conceptions, awaken in us the intense desire for such a life and walk with Him. and often prompt the cry and prayer, Where is the Lord God of Elisha? Let us glance at some of these representative scenes.

Looking back to the last days of Elijah and the transition of his ministry to his successor, we are struck, as the very first illustration of God's resources, with the wonderful way in which Jehovah shows His ability to choose His agents and supply the worker that He most needs at every emergency and crisis in the history of His kingdom. Elijah had just failed and fled from Jezebel

in the supreme moment of his triumph. Too elated, perhaps, the reaction had come before he was prepared to withstand it, and so that humiliating chapter is written in the story of his life, "He arose, and went for his life."

But how tenderly God dealt with him! He let him run until he was thoroughly tired out, let him rest under the juniper tree, and awoke him again and again and again, ministering to his hunger and weariness, until the tired prophet was rested and refreshed. And then God sent him to Horeb that He might give him His last commissions. One of these commissions was a release from the work of which, for a moment, he allowed himself to grow tired, and with it the appointment of those that were to succeed him. "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus," was the Lord's message, "and when you come, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria; and Jehu the son of Nimshi shall you anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat shall you anoint to be prophet in your room." How swiftly he was excused. How soon his successor was elected! How easy it is for God to go through the court of a sinful kingdom or to the farm and field where some humble Elisha is following the oxen and the plough, and call for the instrument He needs just at the moment He requires him. Oh, how humbling it is to our self-importance and pride! God does not need any voice, and it is just an honor and a privilege that He lets us serve Him. Let us be very careful how we get tired too soon or ask to be relieved. God may take us at our word, and He has plenty of others to fill our place.

Second, we have another illustration in 1 Kings 22: 34 of how easy it is for God to pick out an instrument, even an unconscious instrument, for His work and plan. Long before He had decreed and announced the punishment of Ahab for his crimes, and His longsuffering had waited and spared the wicked king again and again. At last the judgment came, but the means were most solemn in their simplicity. Ahab was just returning from the battlefield where he had escaped the assaults of the foe and was securely riding in his chariot away from harm and danger, but "a certain man drew a bow at a venture," and the arrow sped from the string, the sender neither knowing nor caring whither. At that very moment by a slight movement the joints of Ahab's coat of mail were opened at the very spot which that arrow struck. It entered and pierced him to the heart, and he cried, "Carry me out of the host; for I am wounded." As the sun sank in the west, his life ebbed away and the judgment long threatened was at last fulfilled. How easy it is for God to strike His foes. How little we need to worry and trouble ourselves about our enemies! "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, . . . for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord."

A blatant infidel, it is said, was once returning with a party of friends from the market place of a village in England, where he had just defied God, if there was a God, to strike him dead. And as no harm had come to him his godless companions were profanely exulting and glorying in their shame. They were riding along a country road when suddenly their leader fell from his horse in convulsions and as they gathered around him they found he was gasping for breath and in a few moments was dead. No apparent cause could be assigned. Therefore a post-mortem examination was held, and it was found that a little insect, a sand fly, almost the smallest creature that God has created, had been sent by Him as the executioner of the judgment he brought upon himself. This little creature had penetrated his windpipe and choked him to death. God would not condescend to strike him for his impudent infidelity with His own direct hand, but sent that most insignificant creature in the world to show at once His omnipotence and His contempt. This is the God of Elisha. This is our God. Let us trust Him. Let

us fear Him. Let us commit the keeping of our souls unto Him as unto a faithful Creator.

Third, the God of Elisha is the God that can remove the most formidable difficulties from our pathway. The moment Elisha had received the promised power of the Spirit of God, he was met, not by bands of welcoming angels, but by the swelling tide of the angry Jordan that refused to allow him to pass over to the field of his future ministry, where the critical young students of Bethel were watching to see what kind of a prophet he was. But with a single cry, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" he smote the waters and called upon the same almighty resources, and the floods divided and the angry torrent became an escort to open the way to the other side; and as he marched across in triumph, the critical students, awed and humbled, bowed at his feet and humbly said, "The spirit of Elijah does rest on Elisha."

Beloved, the very first thing that you and I will meet when we take some new hold of God for power and blessing will probably be a swollen Jordan, an overwhelming obstacle. What are you going to do about it? There is nothing you can do but remember what God can do and turn at once from your strength and weakness, from your doubts and difficulties, and take Him for your all-sufficiency, and your cry will be, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before the God of Elisha (or Zerubbabel) you shall become a plain." (Zech. 4: 7.)

Fourth, the God of Elisha is able to control the forces of nature. In 2 Kings 2: 20 and 4: 42, there are two fine examples of the power of God through His servant Elisha in the natural world. The first was the healing of barren soil by the sprinkling of some salt onto the spring of waters. And the second was the multiplying of the bread by which the wants of a hundred men were satisfied from twenty little buns, even as in later ages on the Galilean shore the five thousand were fed by the Master's miracle.

And we still have a God who can help us on the farm, in the kitchen, who can fertilize our field, protect our crops, send our harvest, give us our daily bread, multiply the little which the housewife has until it becomes an ample store for her little family circle. So God is walking today with many an humble saint in the lowly place of toil and trial.

Fifth, the God of Elisha is a God of emergencies. The third chapter of Second Kings tells us the story of the water famine in the valley of Eden and the wonderful deliverance which came through Elisha. "This says the Lord," was the prophet's answer to the unbelief of Jehoram and the fears of Jehoshaphat, "You shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that you may drink, both you, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the Lord: He will deliver the Moabites also into your hand." The God of Elisha can send water when there is neither wind nor rain nor any outward sign. He can give us help when all human help fails. He can give us help when, like Jehoshaphat, we are even in a place where we should not be; and it is but a light thing for Him to do the greatest thing for those who trust Him. His resources are so super-abounding that we never can exhaust them, and what He does for us is but a loving provocation for us to ask Him to do yet more.

Sixth, the God of Elisha is the God of grace as well as of temporal blessing. The fourth chapter of Second Kings gives the incident of the widow's oil and the wonderful deliverance it wrought

for her as she poured it into the empty vessels, and it multiplied and grew until it became a fortune, enough to pay her debt and keep her all her days. The oil, we know, was the symbol of the Holy Ghost, and the deep lesson is, that if we have the Holy Spirit in our hearts and in our houses, He will become the source of every needed supply and the guarantee of every possible blessing.

All we need is to use what we have and to take the trials and needs that come to us as empty vessels into which He will pour His fullness and transform every difficulty into an occasion of blessing and praise.

Seventh, the God of Elisha is the God of health and healing. There is no finer example of God's provision for our physical diseases than the story of Naaman and his healing in the waters of Jordan. It was not Elisha that healed him, for he refused even to touch him. It was simply the power of God coming to the suffering one the moment he trusted and obeyed, and his washing in the Jordan was but the consummated act of faith that met God exactly on His Word and persevered in the attitude of faith until the blessing fully came. The same God still waits to heal all that come to Him in the same patient, persistent and overcoming faith.

Eighth, the God of Elisha is the God of the supernatural. The incident of the sixth chapter of Second Kings is a fine illustration of the principle of the supernatural. Going down with his college boys to build the log college on the banks of the Jordan, one of the students lost his axe-head in the water, and the prophet met the emergency by commanding the iron to swim, thus showing that the power of God is superior even to the laws of nature. This is just what the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ proves and makes practicable for us also. We still have the God who can rise above even His own laws when the interests of His children require it, and who is "Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all."

Where is the Lord God of Elijah and Elisha? He is wherever His people's need requires the manifestations of His presence and His power. In the darkest times and the most sinful age He is still what He was in the age of Jezebel and Ahab. He is the God not of a few exclusive people and transcendent circumstances; but He is the God who, as in the case of Elisha, will meet us in the palace, on Mount Carmel, or in the battle, at the plough, or with the widow in her little cottage, anywhere and everywhere that need can claim and faith can trust Him.

Elisha was a man of the people and his life teaches us that our Christ is the Christ of the common people still, and His promise and His grace are for every situation and every suffering child. He is where faith can trust Him, prayer can wait for Him, and patience can hold fast until He comes. This God is our God, the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Lord, help us to understand You better and to trust You more.

But God

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Chapter 2

THE GOD OF PAUL

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4: 19.)

This is Paul's legacy to his disciples and friends. He bequeaths to us his God and all that his own life and experience have revealed of His infinite all-sufficiency. This wonderful phrase begins with "God" and ends with "Christ Jesus," and between these two extremes lie, first, "all your need," and second, "His riches in glory." It is not only a bank-note, but it is a whole bank with all the resources of the proprietor behind it.

The greatest need of Christian life is to know God and His resources. Now the Bible is just a revelation of the all-sufficiency of God through the human channels and instruments that He has used to reveal Himself. The typical lives and characters of the Holy Scriptures are not so much remarkable for themselves as for the divine Presence that stands back of each of them. The difference between human heroes and sacred characters lies just in this: the man is just a man, but behind the man of God, God Himself is ever standing greater than the man and overshadowing him by His infinite and glorious Presence.

When one of the greatest of our national heroes returned, his grateful country crowned him with the honors of a successful war. Behind him there stood, of course, the valuable realm that he had conquered for us and the glorious flag which he represented. But that was all. And he himself was for the time the supreme personality that absorbed the public eye and heart. But behind Enoch is Enoch's God. Behind Elijah is Elijah's God. Behind Moses is a Presence far mightier than Moses. Behind Paul is the marvelous Presence that his life reveals and that his last will and testament bequeaths to every Christian heart. Standing on the threshold of his new life, and just awaking from the startling farewell of his glorified master, Elisha faced the frowning Jordan and the mighty tasks of his divine ministry. But we are so glad that he did not ask for Elijah. He asked for Elijah's God.

And so Paul, separated from his beloved Philippian friends, does not try to comfort them with the mere promise of his earthly presence, for he knew that even that could be but temporary, but he gives them his God. Compressing into a single sentence all the meaning of his own experience and of God's infinite riches he says, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Each of these representative lives reveals God in some new light, and so Paul's God stands before us in a light as distinctive and quite as glorious as Elisha's or Elijah's. What are the lessons the life of Paul teaches us about the all-sufficiency of God? We have often looked at Paul, now let us look at Paul's wonderful God.

First, we see that the God of Paul is a God that can save the greatest sinner and reach the hardest case of unbelief. Paul presents himself to us as the pattern sinner. With deepest humility, and yet utmost self-unconsciousness, he tells us not how deserving he was, but how unworthy. He counts himself the pattern sinner set forth on purpose to show that God can save anybody since He saved him. "For this cause," he says, "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." After Paul, anybody.

The peculiarity of Paul's case, that made it especially difficult, was that Paul was not so much a bad sinner as a good one. He was a moral man, a righteous man, a blameless man, a conscientious man, a religious man, a most earnest worker for the religious cause in which he believed. There was no loose joint in his harness where the arrow of conviction could enter. He had lived "in all good conscience before God," unto the day of his conversion. Such a man is very difficult to reach. Our appeals roll off like water. God's severest warnings found no lodging place in his armor-plated soul.

Yet one flash of Christ's revealing light, one glimpse of His suffering face and pitying love, broke this hard and willful soul to pieces and sent him forth to live under the constraining power of grateful love. Beloved, are you praying for some hard case, some godless, hardened soul? Remember the God that saved Paul and pray and not faint.

Second, the God of Paul is able to raise us to the highest saintliness, for Paul is not only a pattern sinner, but he is also a pattern saint. He dares to say, "Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do." But the primary feature of his saintliness is that it is all Christlikeness. He never stands in front but always hides behind the form and loveliness of Jesus Christ. He never tells us of his perfections, but only of the grace of his Savior. The very watchword of his life is: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." This is the highest as well as the lowliest form of holy character. If we could impress people with the fact that we are preeminently holy, we would discourage them, for they would put their own lives in contrast and say they could never reach us; but if we tell them of a life conscious of its weakness that was able to take from Another the strength it did not have, the righteousness it could not work out, the loveliness that was foreign to its nature, and that the same gracious One will be the same to them that He has been to us, then people are encouraged and lifted up.

The story of Paul's spiritual experience is a constant revelation of Jesus and His nearness to, and sufficiency for the weakest heart, the humblest saint, the most strangely constituted and severely tried and hindered life. Three things were especially marked in Paul's saintliness. The first was what we might call righteousness, the quality of integrity, that essential foundation of all deeper and higher experience, a life right with God and man.

But that was not all. There was a second higher quality of Christian sweetness and loveliness. In one of his most striking passages he contrasts the righteous man with the good man. The righteous man is like the granite rock, hard but yet true. But the good man is like the moss covered mountain side, radiant with flowers and fresh with springing cascades, beautiful as well as true. "For a good man," he says, one would "even dare to die," but for the righteous

man "scarcely" would one die. Now Paul exhorts us to combine these two elements. "Whatsoever things are just" he speaks of in one clause, "Whatsoever things are lovely," in another, and he bids us combine them. In his own life they were beautifully blended. His holiness was not harsh, inaccessible, unattractive, but full of lowliness, gentleness, affectionateness, sympathy, consideration for others, simple as a child, loving as a woman, tender as a mother, affectionate as a father, the fountain of tears always ready to flow at a touch, a heart all throbbing with humanness as well as holiness. This is the life that wins and draws many, and it will come from a higher source, from the heart of Jesus. It was he that wrote about love and lived it, too, but he might well have put the word "Christ" wherever he put "love" in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians.

But there was a third element in the character of Paul for which Christ was equally sufficient, and that is the practical element, the element of sense, soundness of judgment, symmetry and balance of character. "God has . . . given us" he says, "the spirit . . . of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." It was this wonderful completeness that gave strength to every part of Paul's extraordinary life. Now the God that made him what he was is waiting to be the same to each of us if we will meet the tests and take Him at His word.

And then, third, the God of Paul is able to strengthen in times of suffering. Paul was not only a pattern sinner and a pattern saint, but a pattern sufferer. In one of the most remarkable passages of his letters he speaks of himself as a "spectacle" and a "gazing stock," and one set forth in the eyes of the universe to exhibit what God can be in a human life. He was exposed to the severest trials that can come to a human soul or body. Listen to the catalogue in 2 Corinthians 11: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which comes upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern my infirmities."

Again we have a description almost as startling in 1 Corinthians 4: 9-13. "For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ; we are weak, but you are strong; you are honorable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place; and labor, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day."

Here he tells us that, as in the Roman games the brutal master of ceremonies reserved for the last a bloody tragedy, and, after men's lives had been played with through the day, at last the thirst for blood was glutted and some noble gladiator was given over to be murdered in the arena; so, he says, "God has set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death." Then he speaks of every form of privation, suffering and distress, all that can come from

physical drudgery, the deprivation of friends and life, the cruel desertion of loved friends, the fury of the elements, the perils of the sea, the hate of Satan, and the inner burdens that came to him for the sake of others through his sympathetic nature. Paul bore, as it were, the whole burden of the suffering body of Christ, and it seemed as though it were appointed for him to endure that which remained of the afflictions of Christ for His body, the Church.

And yet how did he go through the fiery ordeal? Not only did he endure it, but he was more than conqueror; not only did he stand it with patience, but he gloried in it with triumphant joy. Listen to him as he cries: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." Listen to him again, "As unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

Listen to him once more as he tells the elders of Ephesus not only of what he has suffered but that the Holy Ghost has delivered him. "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me." And yet what does he add: "None of these things move me." They did not even disturb him nor take away his strength from the needs of others and the claims of his work. "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

What was the secret of this wonderful patience, this victorious suffering? He tells us in another place how God answered him when he asked that the great burden of suffering be removed. The answer was, "My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." These things became to him but vessels to hold more of his Lord's grace, and so he not only endured them, but welcomed them and turned everything into victory and praise through the all-sufficient grace of Jesus Christ.

And then, in the fourth place, the God of Paul is a God that can strengthen and sustain the suffering body. Paul's experience reveals two phases. The first is the direct healing of actual sickness by the immediate manifestation of the power of God in the body. We read of one of these healings in 2 Corinthians 1: 8-10. Here we are told of a case where he was "pressed out of measure, above strength," so that he despaired even of life. But God delivered him in direct answer to prayer.

We are told of another similar incident in the Acts of the Apostles, where he had been apparently stoned to death at Lystra, and as the disciples stood around him he arose upon his feet and went quietly on with his work as though nothing had occurred.

But we have a second phase of divine life in Paul, revealed in 2 Corinthians 4. This was not so much an immediate act of healing as a constant habit of drawing the life of Jesus Christ directly

from Him and finding it a constant experience in his mortal flesh, enabling him to rise above the power of his own natural weakness and go through life with a weak frame and yet a supernatural strength. The same God can still be the same to us in our mortal flesh as well as in our spiritual life.

Finally, the God of Paul is sufficient for all the service that He claims from us. Paul's life was preeminently one of service. "I labored more abundantly than they all," he could say, and yet he added, "yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." He took the strength of Jesus and the Holy Spirit for every task and he counted himself equal to anything in this divine endowment. Indeed, every situation that came to him was but an opportunity for service. If he was in prison, he immediately went to work for the salvation of all the prisoners. If he was joined to two soldiers in the barracks, before morning they were converted, and writing to the Philippians from Rome he told them the joyful news that all that are in the barracks have accepted Jesus Christ. Look at him on his voyage to Rome. We see a missionary who started off for the greatest field in the world, having received a free pass as a prisoner of the law, who took command of the ship through that awful tempest, first saving the lives and then the souls of all on board. Look at him again at Rome brought before the emperor, and even dragged into the Coliseum to fight with the lions. How did he look at it? It was simply an opportunity for service. There he had, at last, a chance to preach to old bloody Nero the message of judgment and salvation, and forgetting all about his own danger and even unconscious for the time of the roar of the Namibian lion in yonder cage waiting perhaps to devour him, his thought was to be true to his trust and let God take care of him. Writing about this incident he says: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me . . . Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known." And he adds: "I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." His business was to preach to Nero; God's business was to look out for the lion.

In the face of a thousand disadvantages with neither churches nor missionary boards to back him, in a single lifetime this marvelous man carried the Gospel to all the leading cities of the world, and planted churches from which all the Christianity on earth today has come down. What was the secret of it all? "My God," and, "His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Beloved, will you have Paul's God, and will you use His infinite resources for such a life of saintliness, victorious suffering, and holy service as he?

But God
by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 3
THE GOD OF JACOB

"Fear not, thou worm Jacob." (Isaiah 41:14.)

"I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob."(Isaiah 49:26.)

What a combination! Thou worm Jacob, the Mighty One of Jacob! A worm united to Omnipotence! What so weak and worthless as a worm! What so mighty as the Mighty One of Jacob! This tells the story -- not Jacob, but Jacob's God; not man, but the all-sufficient God displacing man and substituting His own infinite fulness.

We have seen a little of the resources of God in the story of Elijah and Elisha and in the life of Paul. But someone might say that all this might well occur in lives so lofty and sublime, but can I, a weak and worthless man, reach such heights of victory and glory?

Therefore we turn now to the life of a weak and worthless man that we may show that God uses such men to make them the peculiar illustrations of His own grace and sufficiency. The one lesson of Jacob's life is sovereign grace. We have already seen that this was one lesson of Paul's life and that his deepest thought and highest testimony was "Not I, but Christ lives in me."

If ever there was a man that deserved to be called a worm, it was the supplanting son of Isaac. And yet this was the man whom God selected from among all the patriarchs to be head of Israel's tribes and the real founder of the covenant people to whom was committed the oracles of God. Therefore Jacob is more especially fitted to set forth the grace of God than any other of the Bible characters. Let us look at the lessons which his life illustrates with respect to the resources of our God.

We see in Jacob's life the God who can choose and use unworthy and unattractive lives and characters. Had we been choosing on natural principles between the two sons of Isaac we may have preferred the big-hearted, impulsive Esau. His father did prefer him and tried his best to hold for him the tribal blessing and divine birthright. There was little naturally in Jacob that was attractive. He represented that class of the human race, happily by no means all, who have become the embodiment of the hard, keen, grasping man, the man who seems to have become crystallized into a financial machine and bargain counter. Jacob was intensely selfish and deceitful, disposed to take advantage of another's misfortune. There is no type of human nature that, by the common consent of mankind, is more detestable than the hard, cold, heartless miser. He is lower even than the groveling sensualist in the scale of humanity. And yet God chose this man in order to prove that there is no class of humanity so hard, so hopeless, as not to be within reach of sovereign grace, indeed, that God loves a hard case and that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

If there is a soul reading these lines who is discouraged about himself, remember Jacob, and then remember Jacob's God, the One that could choose a worm and make him a prince with God and with men; the One who is still saying, "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."

And then the God of Jacob is a God that can discern elements of good and possibilities of the highest things in the most unlikely lives. Back of Jacob's meanness there was something that had in it inherently the elements of power and blessing, and back of Esau's apparent nobility there was something earthborn and incapable of the highest things. Not without reason has God said of these two men, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." What was it in Jacob that God loved and that became a point of contact with His grace? It was that element which we might call the spiritual. It was the peculiar insight into the higher things which discerns and chooses the best. It is a kind of intuition, a spiritual instinct, the germ in fact, of the higher nature. It enabled Jacob to discover, to appreciate, and to desire intensely all that was meant in the divine birthright, while on the other hand the lack of it led Esau to despise this. All he cared for was the gratification of his natural and grosser appetites. He was a splendid animal; that was all. When he was hungry, he wanted food, and he cared not how he got it. He had not the power to comprehend or prize the higher blessing which was his by natural right. In the hour of his extremity we find him exclaiming, "Behold, I am at the point to die: and what profit shall this birthright do to me?" That was the very time when it should have meant most to him, for it secured to him the favor of his covenant God, a part among the covenant people, and the high honor of standing in the front of that line that was to lead up to the promised seed, the coming Messiah. While it had the highest natural dignities and privileges connected with it, it was preeminently spiritual in its meaning and value. And yet Esau, realizing none of these things, recklessly and blindly threw it away for a mess of pottage. The sacred writer crystallizes into a single sentence the meaning of the act, "Thus Esau despised his birthright."

Now what God loved in Jacob was the quality that appreciated, desired and chose the higher things. God loved him for it and God came to meet him and gave him what he desired. "They have their reward," is the awful sentence of Christ on humanity. Men and women generally get what they want. If they are after earthly things they will probably find them. If they "seek . . . first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" "they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness . . . shall be filled."

It is often true that the worst and the best are closely akin in human nature. The most discouraged and sinful man is often so because the devil has seen his folly and has perverted the bud into a thorn. God sees everything through the crust of evil, and He comes to meet and satisfy the yet undimmed jewel of some deep and earnest longing for better things. It is comforting to know that we have a God who is not looking for the evil in us but for the good that is trying to find some point of contact with better things, looking in every human soul for some place where the chain of mercy can fasten and lift us to the skies. Dear friend, if you are far away from God and conscious of utter unworthiness, there is one question we would ask you, Would you have God's love for your heart? Would you choose His will if it were offered to you? Would you part with everything to have the best and highest things? Then you have that which God loved in Jacob and that which will feel after God until it finds Him.

In the third instance, we see in Jacob's God one who can reveal Himself to a soul that is utterly ignorant of Him. When Jacob went out from his father's house and his mother's arms he had indeed set his heart on the highest things so far as he knew them and won by a very unworthy transaction the covenant, but as yet he knew nothing of God in his own experience. We see this in his confession in Bethel's cave, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not."

We see also the lack of all filial love and confidence. "How dreadful is this place!" It was a raw, unenlightened, natural heart shrinking from the presence of God, knowing nothing of trust and love. But to that poor, dark, lonely heart God came and made Himself known by that vision of divine light and revelation, which became, not only to him, but to all coming generations, a ladder reaching to heaven from the lowest, loneliest spot. Well do I remember the day that I rode along the bridle path that leads to the ruins of ancient Bethel, stopping from time to time at the numerous caves along the road and wondering in which of them Jacob lay down with a stone for his pillow on the first night of his absence from his home. My guide pointed across the valley, and he said, "This is the cave where Jacob slept, because yonder you can see on the rock hillside the great ledges of stone rising one above the other like mighty steps, and in the dim moonlight, you know, it seemed to Jacob like a ladder that reached to heaven." You see my guide was an accomplished higher critic. He thought he could explain the Bible without any supernatural element. I told him I knew better. The ladder Jacob saw was not even that bold ledge of ascending rocks, but it was that invisible stair which your faith and mine has often seen since, reaching from our helplessness to His high heaven and bringing down the angels of God with messages of help and blessing. That was the time when Jacob first met with God.

There comes such an hour in every redeemed life. You had known about Him, you had chosen Him, you had set your heart upon Him, but He had never yet become a real fact in your experience. But one night of loneliness, one hour of deep trouble, some crisis when you were forced to pray, you found God and He became revealed to you henceforth the greatest fact in your life, the One with whom you have to do, your covenant God and Friend, saying to you as He did to Jacob, "Behold, I am with you, and will keep you in all places wheresoever you go . . . for I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of." It is yours to choose Him. It is His to make Himself known, and it is His eternal promise: "Then shall we know if we follow on to know the Lord."

In the fourth place, the God of Jacob is one that follows His children even through years of imperfection and wandering while they are often far from Him. For Jacob went forth from that Bethel vision a new man and a man of God but still full of the old selfish, supplanting spirit. And so we see him following his own devices, fighting his own battles, intriguing with Laban and trying to match his cunning with equal cunning. We see him bargaining for a wife and losing in the first transaction. We see him later getting the better of his uncle, and finally, through deep strategy leaving the land of his temporary adoption possessed of boundless riches; and yet he was the same old Jacob in many ways. He had not forsaken God. He had prayed often. He had asked God to prosper him in his business contrivances and schemes. But still it was Jacob, the worm Jacob, the selfish, supplanting man. But God did not leave him all these years. He followed him, loved him, blessed him, prospered him, and in due time called him back to better things.

And so, dear child of God, He has followed you even amid your wanderings. He has not wanted you where you were; but He has not left you alone. As He went with Israel through the wilderness, so He has gone with you on the weary round. In all your affliction He has been afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence has saved you and has led you all your days. Thus God still loves His imperfect children. He does not forsake them in their mistakes and follies, but He is still a God of infinite longsuffering, boundless patience and tender, fatherly pity. This should not encourage us to live short of our highest privileges, but it should lead us by grateful love to follow Him more closely and choose His highest will.

Then, we see in Jacob's God one who at last knew how to bring the pressure that led Jacob to the crisis of his life. The time had come for a new and deeper experience, so God led him back toward his ancient home. It is the old Jacob coming back. He is enlarged with flocks and herds and a great household, but we see Jacob all through his wise forethought, his infinite contriving to protect his family and his flocks, and when he finds his incensed brother Esau coming to meet him with an armed band, he exhausts all the resources of his skill and invention to forestall him or defend himself from him. He divides his family and his flocks into little bands so that if one is stricken the other will escape. At last he realizes how vain it all is, and he is thrown absolutely and helplessly upon the mercy and power of God.

The way narrows to a lone path where only two can walk, God and Jacob. There just across the brook Jabbok and under the solemn stars of the Orient, Jacob came face to face with the crisis of his life. He must either go down or go higher. It is either God or ruin. And so the religious instinct turns heavenward. Jacob prays as he has never prayed before.

But there is another conflict. God is wrestling with Jacob more than Jacob is wrestling with God. We are told significantly that "there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day." It was the Son of Man. It was the Angel of the Covenant. It was God in human form pressing down and pressing out the old Jacob life, and before the morning broke God had prevailed and Jacob fell with his thigh dislocated. But as he fell, he fell into the arms of God and there he clung and wrestled too until the blessing came, and the new life was born and he arose from the earthly to the heavenly, the human to the divine, the natural to the supernatural, and as he went forth that morning he was a weak and broken man, but God was there instead and the heavenly voice proclaimed, "Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince have you power with God and with men, and have prevailed."

Beloved, this must ever be a typical scene in every transformed life. There comes a crisis hour to each of us if God has called us to the highest and best. When all our resources fail, when we face either ruin or something higher than we ever dreamed, when we must have infinite help from God and yet before we can have it we must let something go; we must surrender completely, we must cease from our own wisdom, strength and righteousness and become crucified with Christ and alive in Him. God knows how to lead us up to this crisis and He knows how to lead us through. Beloved, is He leading you thus? Is this the meaning of your deep trial, of your difficult surroundings, of that impossible situation, or that trying place through which you cannot go without Him and yet you have not enough of Him to give you victory? Oh, turn to Jacob's God. Cast yourself helplessly at His feet. Die to your strength and wisdom and in His loving arms and rise like Jacob into His strength and all-sufficiency. There is no way out of your hard and narrow place but at the top. You must get deliverance by rising higher and coming

into a new experience with God. Oh, may it bring you into all that is meant by the revelation of the Mighty One of Jacob.

In the sixth place we see in Jacob's God the God who knows how to finish His work by the slow discipline of suffering. That experience at Jabbok was the real crisis; but the completion of the work required the years that followed. There are some things which God can only do through time. There are processes of grace that need to be carried through long years of discipline. There is a slow fire which dissolves and consumes as no fierce furnace heat can ever do in a moment of time. There is One that sits as a Refiner and Purifier of silver through the long years, finishing His work until He can see His image in the molten metal. This is the God of Jacob. And so, through the forty years that followed, He led Jacob through the longest, slowest, hardest trials. And how keen the pain! How sensitive the spirit that He touched!

So He comes to you, beloved, in the place that hurts you most. Often it is our heart's deepest affections. Rachel died; his family pride was wounded in the dishonor of his daughter; Joseph, Rachel's son, was torn from his presence amid scenes and associations of unspeakable horror. The years dragged out their slow length with that haunting shadow of suspense and agony, until at last he cried, "All these things are against me." But all the while Jacob was being burned up and God burned in. And when at last we meet him in the calm sunset of his life, we hear the rash, self-confident man saying something he could not have learned otherwise, "I have waited for Your salvation, O Lord." And we see the sorrow at last turned into joy. We see the shadows pass away and the rainbow arch surmount their frowning masses. We hear the evening song of a victorious life, "The God which fed me all my life long . . . the Angel which redeemed me from all evil." We see even Joseph given back and all the sorrow turned into joy while its blessed spiritual lesson remains forevermore in the transformed life of the venerable patriarch and the established saint. Thus the God of Jacob knows how to try us and how to deliver us out of trial. "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you," but, "that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perishes, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

The seventh point we will consider is that the God of Jacob is a God that loves to use the instrument that He has thus prepared. It was not Abraham the mighty believer, it was not Isaac, the meek and gentle son; but it was Jacob, the transformed supplanter, that God chose to be the head of Israel's tribes and the founder of the chosen people, who, on his dying bed, pronounced the prophetic blessing upon his seed which all the ages since then have been fulfilling. To this day the nation bears the name of Israel and the seed of Jacob.

And so God will take our lives when He has prepared them in proportion to what they have cost Him. The degree of power that comes out of an element is measured by the degree that goes into it. The mighty power that ran the steamer and the train came out of yonder coal mine, but all that power was put in the coal mine ages ago, when God burned up by fiery heat of primeval times the vast forest of vegetation that covered the world and turned them into coal. It first came down from heaven into the mines of earth and then went out from the mines of earth in another form of the same power.

And so after God has pressed into a life by long and hard processes of trial and discipline the

influences of His grace and the power of His transforming Spirit, then He loves to take out of that life the same power and expend it upon others. Power never can be lost, and so if we receive of God's fulness we can no more help giving it out than the sun can stop shining. And so the God of Jacob, if we will let Him have us, hold us, fill us, will surely use us, and whether it be as the silent salt that penetrates the air with its wholesome savor, or the glorious light that more positively radiates over earth and sky, we shall become forces for good and instruments for the glory of God and the blessing of our fellow man, and all flesh shall know "that I, the Lord, am your Savior and Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob."

But God

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 4

THE GOD OF ESTHER

"Surely the wrath of man will praise You: the remainder of wrath You will restrain." (Psalm 76: 10.)

"For if you altogether hold your peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but you and your father's house shall be destroyed: and who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14.)

We have been looking at the divine character and resources as illustrated in the lives of remarkable men occupying a high place in the stage of history and kingdom of God. We will now look at the revelation of God as it appears in a unique and very different situation, in the life of a lone girl and a despised man, far removed from sympathy and influence and called to face the most trying difficulties and the most terrific dangers. The story of Esther tells us how God can meet such a life and make the wrath of man to praise Him and the remainder thereof restrain.

The story is soon told. It is one of the romances of the Bible. It is a chapter from the reign of Xerxes, the rich and splendid king of Persia, whose mighty army of millions was defeated by the brave Greeks. The drama opens with a splendid feast costing millions of dollars. In the height of the gaiety the king called for his beautiful and favorite wife to appear before his drunken lords and gratify their coarse curiosity by what always is to an Eastern woman a sacrifice of modesty, the exhibition of her beautiful face. Vashti refused and was deposed from her high place and another sought to fill it.

In the family of an upright Jew named Mordecai, was a beautiful maiden, his niece, and to her lot it fell in the providences of God to inherit the crown of Vashti and to become queen of Persia.

The favorite of Xerxes was a proud noble named Haman. Haman and his vanity were deeply wounded by the refusal of Mordecai to pay the worship and obeisance that he claimed from the people. Mordecai disdained to degrade himself at the feet of any man and so Haman tried to destroy him. The plot moves on with dramatic force. Haman was too proud to wreak his vengeance upon Mordecai alone, but determined upon a magnificent revenge, the destruction of his people, the entire Jewish nation scattered throughout the empire of Persia and numbering doubtless many millions. In an evil hour he won the consent of Xerxes and the decree went forth, signed by the king's royal signet, which none could reverse, that on a certain day the whole Jewish population could be massacred under official sanction. In addition to this he planned the destruction of Mordecai himself and even went so far as to erect the gallows on which he was to be hanged.

But God's providences began to work. First it came about that Mordecai was the instrument of saving the life of the king by revealing a secret plot upon his life, and after having been neglected for a long time, suddenly God laid upon the heart of the king the remembrances of his kindness and led him to issue a royal decree which Haman himself was compelled to carry out for a public tribute to Mordecai in the sight of the whole population and of the most distinguished character.

Mordecai did not rest in quiet inaction, but immediately called upon Esther to rise to the occasion and meet the great purpose for which God had exalted her to her high station. This meant nothing less than that Esther should go into the presence of her king and plead for the lives of her people. This was rendered peculiarly difficult by the fact that Esther herself had not been summoned into the king's presence for many days and she felt that her venture unbidden might cost her life. It was then that Mordecai addressed to her the stirring and solemn message of the text. "If you altogether hold your peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but you and your father's house shall be destroyed: and who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

This decided her, and asking her uncle to help her by his prayers, she ventured into the presence of the king. God was with her. The golden scepter was stretched out and her royal lord bade her ask anything she chose even unto half of the kingdom. Esther was tactful enough not to press her petition too soon but she asked the king to a banquet that day and invited Haman to accompany him. But again Esther waited another day, renewing the invitation and still waiting on God to prepare the way and show her the very moment when she was to act. At last the crisis moment came and it came just after Mordecai had been signally honored by the public tribute ordered by the king. Haman had just returned from the hated service when he went into the presence of the king and queen to the banquet and then it was that Esther, turning indignantly upon him, demanded protection from his wickedness and cruelty for her people. Haman unwittingly in pleading for her mercy insulted her before the king, and then it was that the royal wrath would brook no delay but ordered his wicked courtier to immediate execution. Then Esther obtained not the reversal of the decree of the massacre which was impossible under the Persian law, but the issue of another decree under the royal seal by which the Jews throughout the empire were permitted to defend themselves and were even invited to do so under royal approval. This turned the scale on their side and when the eventful day came their threatened destruction was turned into a universal triumph and their enemies fell before them while they had life, deliverance, honor and joy. The feast of Purim is the memorial of this great deliverance and to this day it is celebrated among the Hebrew people as one of the most joyous observances of all their sacred year.

This romantic story is full of spiritual lessons and revelations of God.

One, it teaches us that God rules in the affairs of nations and overrules political events for His glory and the establishment of His kingdom. Above the throne of the king of Persia was the authority of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Christ is "the head over all things to the church," and the government of nations and the events of providences are but the working out of God's higher will, the scaffolding on which He is building up His spiritual kingdom and His eternal purpose for His people. The very king of Persia arose in the fulfillment of Daniel's

prophecy. The very throne of Xerxes was but a foundation on which God had meant to build the story of Esther and her people. God used the kingdom to be at once a refuge for His people, a discipline for them in their sins, and an occasion for His wonderful providences in their deliverances.

Two, we see the plans and pleasures of the ungodly used by God for higher purposes. The costly and extravagant banquet of Xerxes, the deposition of his queen, and even his own selfish desire for the most beautiful maiden in his empire -- all these became links in God's providence for bringing Esther to the front and using her for the great trust which she should afterwards fulfill in the deliverance of His people.

And so the business and the pomp and pleasure of the world are simply occasions for God to introduce the history of His own people and the working out of some greater plan. Just as the court of Persia was but the home of Nehemiah and the house of Pharaoh the place for Moses to be trained, so Xerxes' place was but a providential door through which Esther might pass upon the stage of providence and work out her beautiful and glorious career of faith and victory.

Three, our gifts, qualities, talents, and stations in life are all part of the divine plan and trusts given us by God to be used for Him. Esther's beauty was not her own, but God's endowment. Esther's high and queenly place was not an opportunity for a selfish and splendid life, but was a door of service for God and her people. Her influence over the king was not given her that she might aggrandize her own interests and fortune, but that she might use it in time of need to help the cause of Jehovah. And so our natural qualities of person, our wealth, our social position, our plans, our public positions of power or influence -- these are all sacred trusts that God has placed in our hands for us to use for Him, and of us He says as He did of Esther, "Who knows whether you are come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" Beloved, are we so using them? Do we count all things His and not our own, and are we watching every opportunity to turn them to account for the purpose for which they are given us?

Four, we learn from the story of Esther that God often permits things to occur and then be apparently forgotten for the purpose of using them at a later period as links in His providential plan. The little incident of Mordecai saving the life of the king which was allowed to pass by without recognition was not God's fault, and in due time came up at the opportune moment and became the turning point in Mordecai's career, arousing for him the sympathy and recognition of the king and the people and preparing him for a place of high trust that he afterwards filled. So God lets things happen in our lives, little acts of obedience, faith, sacrifice, unrecognized, and we forget all about them perhaps, but in due time the wheel of providence turns round and they come to the front and God makes them the occasion of some high calling, some marvelous opening, some grand reward.

Let us count nothing insignificant. God is working in everything and far in advance of all that we can see. Let us watch for the fulfillment of His plan and we shall always have providences to watch.

Five, God often lays His burdens on the hearts of men who do not know Him and uses them to carry out His plans. "I have surnamed you, though you have not known me," was His word to

Cyrus, that mighty king who was God's direct instrument for carrying out one of His greatest plans, although he himself was an ignorant and superstitious heathen. And so He spoke to Xerxes and made him understand His will. There was a night when the luxurious Persian king was unable to close his eyes in sleep. As he lay dozing on his bed he felt something was wrong, and when the morning dawned, he sent for his counselors and had them search the records of the kingdom until they found that the faithful Mordecai had never been rewarded for his great service in saving the king's life.

What a glimpse this gives us into the mysteries of divine government. What a meaning it adds to the mighty announcement of our ascended King, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He is able to move the hearts of men for our defense at His will while we calmly wait, keeping our hands off and looking to Him to work for us and to shield us with His mighty wing. I have known an ungodly man to become so impressed that he must give a large amount for some of God's suffering children that he could not rest until the trust was discharged, although he wondered at himself and could not explain or even justify his impulsive action. One of the largest gifts ever offered for missions in this country was a bequest made by a man who had never had any special interest in missions until his last days and who made this bequest after some friends had specially prayed that God would send help for His cause. We have a God that can reach all hearts, and there are people whom we could not reach directly whom we can always touch by way of the throne.

Six, God often permits the wicked for a time to triumph and the cause of His people to reach a crisis of danger and the crisis almost to go too far. How imminent the peril of Esther's people! How close the coincidences! How sudden and swift the interposition of God and the deliverance of the doomed nation. It almost seemed as if things had gone too far. Everything was encompassed with difficulty. Only the Divine hand could avert it. But how perfectly everything fitted together. How sharply the whole drama was focused into one short day of astounding surprise! Truth indeed was stranger than fiction, and as is ever true, the story of faith is the sublimest romance of history. Beloved, is He trying you? Are your difficulties and adversaries thickening on every side? Does it almost seem as though the promise has lingered so long that it might come too late? Trust Him. His path is in the whirlwind and the storm. The clouds are the dust of His feet. He will not let the promise fail. "Though it tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not tarry."

Seven, God has His plans prepared in advance of the devil's maneuvers and His instruments ready to counteract his deepest designs. Zechariah tells us in one of his visions of four horns that the enemy sent out to pierce God's people but four carpenters followed close behind them to fray their horns and take away their power to harm. So here while the devil had his weak and unscrupulous Xerxes ready by his rash decree to destroy a nation, God had His wise and upright Mordecai in the place of faith and influence prepared to counteract his folly. The devil had his diabolical Haman but the Lord had His Esther a little nearer the center of power to interpose just at the right moment. There are no surprises in the government of God. He is always prepared for the enemy and if we abide in Him and closely follow Him there is no power in earth or hell that can ever harm us.

Eight, while God is ever watching and working to defend His people and His cause, yet He expects from them their prompt, obedient and courageous cooperation in the crisis hour. There

are occasions when there is nothing for us to do but wait and trust, but there are moments for prompt, wise, decisive action, and when those moments come there must be no parleying and hesitation or half-heartedness. Such a moment came to Esther when her uncle directed her to go into the presence of the king and plead for her people. It was natural for her to hesitate, but it would have been folly for her to have disobeyed. God had other agencies that He could have raised up, and, indeed, Mordecai firmly believed that deliverance and enlargement would come from some other quarter if she had failed, but she would have perished and her father's house. There are times, dear friend, when you and I must speak brave words for right, must incur prejudice and misrepresentation because we stand by a cause that needs assistance, but the safest thing is always to be brave and true. Let us not hesitate to speak a word of vindication, to stand at the risk of interest, friendship or even life itself for the cause of truth, for the work of God. It needs much wisdom to show us just when to be still and when to act. There is a moment when the order is, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord," but there is another moment when the order is, "Speak unto the (people) that they go forward," and when that moment comes decisive action is the only course of safety and honor.

Nine, God not only saves us from the wicked but lets them fall into their own snares. The gallows that Haman erected for Mordecai furnished the means for his own execution. The decree that called for the massacre of the Hebrews brought instead the destruction of their enemies. The man that was doomed to death by the conspiracy of his adversaries was lifted into the place that these very enemies had formerly held. The way of the wicked was turned upside down, and their shafts reverted upon their own heads. It is a terrible thing to take a stand against God or His people. Christ counts the persecution of His children as His own. Our hatred and opposition to the cause of Christ and the servants of Christ is counted by the Scriptures as our fighting even against God, and it is a fearful thing to plunge against the sword of the Almighty. Let us be careful how we touch God's anointed or wrong His servants. Such weapons will be turned against ourselves in bitter failure and retribution. We cannot be too careful in speaking against the children of God. We are liable to be misled and even where we are not able to commend, silence is often the safest course. But they who scatter firebrands, arrows and death shall find their own houses on fire and their own hearts pierced by the returning shafts.

Ten, there are crisis times in the history of individuals and religious movements and those are times of peculiar responsibility. Such a time had come in the life of Esther and on that moment converged all the significance of her life and all the preparation of God's providence in the years before. Surely if ever there was a crisis time in the history of the world it is today. Beloved, let us remember that we too are come to the kingdom for such a time as this. All things are focusing into the consuming light of the world's last crisis. God has given to each of us our kingdom of opportunity, natural ability, providential environment, or spiritual endowment for the most solemn and important responsibilities and ministries. May He help us to be wholly true, "redeeming the time."

But God

by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 5

THE VISION OF GOD

"I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42: 5, 6.)

The book of Job is the world's oldest poem and presents some of the profoundest spiritual teachings of the book of revelation. It is an inspired drama and its design is twofold: first, to unfold the principles of God's moral government in dealing with men; second, to show the inadequacy of human nature to stand the tests of life without a deeper and diviner spiritual life.

The leading figure of the drama is a man who stands above his fellow-men in all the best qualities of human character. By the testimony of God he was a good man, the best man on earth, a man who "feared God, and eschewed evil." He was undoubtedly a servant of God and we would call him a converted man. But he had not yet passed through the deeper experience of self-crucifixion which brings the soul into the divine nature and experience of true sanctification.

To this man God permitted the severest tests to come. The first part of the dramatic scene appears in the deep inquiries of his friends and counselors into the cause and explanation of his peculiar trial. Three men came to him, three eminent philosophers and moralists, representing all the best qualities of the wisdom of the world. Their very names are significant of the honor, the strength, the wealth, the beauty, and the wisdom of the world. Day after day through his protracted and distracting trial they sat by his side; they talked with him, vainly trying to comfort him. They still more vainly tried to instruct him in the principles of divine government and show him that he must be guilty of some great iniquity or God would not thus afflict him. Each of them had three turns and Job in turn answered each of them three times. But when it all ended none of them were wiser than at first. Job was utterly unsatisfied with their consolations and exhortations, and dismissed them with the honest and sarcastic words: "Miserable comforters are you all."

They represent the world's best philosophy and wisdom, and they prove the utter inadequacy of the human mind by all its searching to "find out God."

But trial develops yet another fact, and that is the failure of Job. The good man soon broke under his terrible continued affliction, and began to vindicate himself and reflect upon God for the injustice and severity of his affliction.

Then a fourth character appeared upon the scene. Elihu, whose name signifies his direct relation to God as His servant and messenger, came with an entirely new message, even with the inspired Word of God Himself. Twice he spoke and Job also answered him, but all his

profound and deeply spiritual teaching fell in vain upon the ears of the tried and distracted sufferer. A stronger influence, a diviner touch was necessary before his heart would yield and his lesson be fully learned.

At last it came and it came only through the direct revelation of God Himself. After they had all spoken and Job had again and again reechoed and repeated his complaints and self-justification, God suddenly appeared upon the scene in a sublime vision of majesty and power, and spoke to him from the midst of the whirlwind. The message was in two sections interrupted by a brief pause in which Job broke down and sank in silence and submission before God's demand, "Shall he that contends with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproves God let him answer it." And Job replied: "Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I will lay my hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yes, twice; but I will proceed no further." (Job 40: 2-5.)

But God proceeded with His majestic message through the next two chapters, unfolding to Job the majesty and glory of the natural creation, pointing to the forces of nature, the stars in their courses, the ordinances of heaven, the clouds and lightnings, the springs of the sea, the providence that supplies the wants of every living thing, the instincts of the birds, the mighty creatures that roam in the ocean and depths of the forest, and as the vision of God's majesty and glory passed before the mind of the humble and broken penitent, all his pride and self-vindication passed away, and he cried: "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees You. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

This was at length the crisis of Job's spiritual life. This was the death of self and the beginning of the life of God and from this hour the whole story turns upon its axis and the whole life and experience of Job becomes transformed. The moment he condemned himself God began to justify him. The moment he sank in the dust God began to lift him up. The moment he ceased arguing and contending with his friends and began to pray for them, God turned his captivity and brought them to bow at his feet and ask his forgiveness and his prayers, and from that hour even his temporal circumstances were changed, his trials passed, all that he had lost was restored to him twofold, and henceforth life flowed on upon a new plane of resurrection power, glory and blessing. Let us look, therefore, more closely at this turning point, this crisis of a life, this great example which God has held out to us in the story of His ancient servant.

One, the words of our text remind us of the value of a revelation of divine truth. "I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear." This describes the revelation which comes to the outward ear and the natural intelligence which it represents. In the drama of the book of Job, Elihu represents the revelation of God's Word which comes to the ear and to the mind. Now, it is needless to say that the revelation of God's will and purpose is absolutely necessary and is the foundation of all deeper spiritual revelations to the soul, but at the same time, the revelation of the truth is not known without the deeper revelation of God Himself to the inner spirit by the Holy Ghost. It requires a spiritual mind to understand the teaching of the Spirit. The cold, natural intellect cannot receive the things of God by the hearing of the ear alone. Therefore, many of the brightest and profoundest minds have failed to understand the deeper teachings of the Scriptures and have even become, by their higher criticism, enemies of the Bible and misinterpreters of the volume they have professed to elucidate and explain. The greatest weakness of Christianity today arises from the fact that so many of its followers have only

heard of God by the hearing of the ear.

Two, our text teaches us the need of a deeper revelation of God Himself. "Now my eye sees You," he cried. It is not the truth but the God of truth. It is not the Book but its Author and Inspirer that we are now dealing with. The mission of the Holy Ghost is to reveal God through the truth and back of the truth to the earnest and inquiring soul. This was the experience that had come to Job and which broke his heart, humbled his pride, slew his self-sufficiency, and made room in his heart and life for God.

This has ever been the turning point of every great spiritual life. We are told that far off in Mesopotamia "the God of glory appeared unto . . . Abraham," and from that moment the whole story of faith began. It was easy for him to leave his country and his home. It was easy for him to go into an unknown future. There was One henceforth with him whom he personally knew and in whose appearance all else became as nothing. God had appeared unto him.

Later another figure appears on the scene at a still greater crisis in the history of redemption. It is the great lawgiver, Moses. But the secret of Moses' life is all given in a single sentence: "He endured, as seeing him who is invisible." He had met God. He always saw Him, and the deepest cry of Moses' heart and life was uttered later when he prayed: "I beseech You, show me Your glory." "If Your presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Your people have found grace in Your sight? Is it not in that You go with us?"

The next great life that stands out in bold relief in Israel's story is David, and the one predominant and determining feature of his life was godliness. "I have set the Lord always before me," is the watchword of his whole experience. Isaiah's call came in that hour of which he says, "I saw ... the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up," and then he passed through an experience precisely the same as that of Job.

The greatest character of Scripture, the mighty Paul, started upon his new career from the moment he saw a vision of the Lord Jesus, and from that hour there was one Face, one Form, one Presence, one Thought that dominated his life -- the vision, the presence, the will of his Master.

The greatest moment in every life is when Jesus Christ becomes actually present and intensely real and vivid in our consciousness. Beloved, has that moment come to you? Have you passed from the mere stage of intellectual knowledge of Christ to personal intimacy? Is it the historical Christ, or is it the Christ of today of whom you can say as one of the most devout of the German writers said: "It seems to me as if Jesus Christ had been crucified only yesterday."

Three, the effect of the vision of God on Job was marked and immediate. It brought about the death of self. The glare of that sunburst of divine glory blinded him to every other light and sight and especially to the sight of himself. All his vindications, justifications, self-complacencies were gone. In the light of God's glory he could only see himself as worthless and utterly vile, and he longed to get out of his own sight and never see himself again. It was not merely that he took back his words and repudiated his acts, but he hated and renounced himself. Self-

denial is not giving up a few things, but it is letting self go and refusing any longer to know ourselves, to live for ourselves, or to expect any good from ourselves. This was the effect of the vision of God upon Isaiah. When he saw Jehovah in His glory he cried, "I am undone; . . . I am a man of unclean lips: my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." When Daniel saw this great vision he tells us, "There remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength." This is the only way that self can ever die; a sight of Christ, and above all, the reception of Christ to live and reign in the will, the heart, life, will drive out every rival and especially that oldest and worst rival of all, our own will, our own self-confidence, self-righteousness, and self-love.

The second effect of the revelation of God was the uplifting of his heart to a higher plane of divine life. Immediately we find him praying for his enemies. If there is one miracle greater than another it is when human hate becomes transformed into heavenly love. There is nothing so hard as to really love the people who have exasperated, tried and tormented us, and especially those that have done this like Job's friends, in the name of religion. But the vision of God made Job equal to it. There came such a flood of divine life and love into his soul that colored everything henceforth with its own color. When the heart receives Christ it sees everything and everyone in the light of Christ, and it loves not as man, but as God loves.

The third effect of the revelation of God is that Job was vindicated by God Himself. Job did not need to be revenged upon the men who had wronged him, for God took them in hand and sent them to make amends themselves by humble acknowledgment of their error, by sacrificing to God, and by asking Job to pray for them. The best revenge that we can have upon the people that have done us wrong is to be the means of blessing them. When we die to self and become one with God, God makes even our enemies to be at peace with us, brings good out of evil, and turns the curse into a blessing. "In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the waste places shall be builded. And the desolate land shall be tilled. . . . And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden."

Finally God Himself restored to Job doubly all that he had lost before. He gave him back his health by a divine miracle and added to his years twice as many as he had before, so that Job lived after his restoration one hundred and forty years, and probably before his life ended he had reached at least two hundred years, older even than Abraham himself.

He gave him back his family, and it is particularly mentioned that the daughters of Job were the most beautiful women in the land, and their names are all significant of the highest qualities both of person and of heart. He gave him back his property so that he had twice as much in every kind of earthly ware as he had formerly enjoyed, and He blessed Job's later years more than those in the beginning.

All this is still true: "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Not necessarily in this world shall it come to pass in the life of a saint that earthly prosperity shall be measured out to him in proportion to the spiritual blessing, but before the circle is completed, before the true life is finished, it will be made real, for this world is but a segment of the circle, but a chapter of the story. It is when He comes again that all the

promises of blessing that come to the consecrated soul shall be fully realized and that the "all things" shall be completely added. Thus "every one that has forsaken houses . . . or lands for (Christ's) sake, shall receive" not double but a "hundredfold." Then shall it be true: "If we suffer, we shall also reign with him." Then the lives that have died to self and sin shall sit with Him on His throne, shall share "the power of an endless life," and shall receive for every cross a crown, and for every weight of pain "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," and for the little sacrifice of a surrendered life an "inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away."

But God
by A. B. Simpson

Chapter 6
THE SECRET OF THE VISION

"Oh that I knew where I might find Him! That I might come even to His seat! . . . Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He does work, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." (Job 23: 3, 8, 9.)

This is the cry of the soul that longs for God and feels after Him if haply it may find Him. This is the deepest cry of every true spirit, the deepest need of every human life, and the greatest prayer that God can answer for a soul. For "this is life eternal, that they might know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent."

How shall we find God? How shall He become to our consciousness more real and satisfying than any other personality and other need?

First, we can find God in nature. "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. . . . Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world."

Nature alone is not able to reveal God in His gracious character as the sinful soul needs to know Him, but after we know Him from His Word, then nature is full of the most blessed illustrations of His character and the most vivid unfoldings of His love and power; and the whole creation becomes to the consecrated soul a great temple with the blue heavens for its dome, the glowing stars for its lamps of fire, the vernal earth for its emerald pavement, and the voices of the ocean, the thunder, the hum and song of the whole animated creation for its ceaseless anthem of worship and praise. There is a sense in which everything we see in this beautiful world is but a letter in the great alphabet of truth, telling of Him who

"Shines in the sun,
Refreshes in the breeze,
Glowes in the stars,
And blossoms in the trees.

Lives through all life,
Extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided,
Operates unspent."

I am sorry for the man that cannot see God in every turn of the beautiful kaleidoscope of nature and hear His voice in every note of the great organ of this voiceful world.

Second, we find God in His Word. Nature alone spells out but half the sentence and writes upon the heavens and earth, "God is," but leaves an awful blank and note of interrogation. The Bible alone can finish the sentence and write the complete revelation, "God is Love." The nineteenth Psalm, from which we have quoted, quickly passes from the natural to the supernatural and to the testimony of the Word respecting the attributes and glory of God. While the heavens declare His glory and the earth His handiwork yet it is "the law of the Lord" that "is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

This Book is the mirror of God. On every page we behold His glorious face. In Genesis we see Him before there was anything else to see, the supreme and solitary Being who was before all things. And then we see the teeming universe spring from His mighty creating hand, sustained by His almighty providence. The fall of man wrecks His beneficent plan, but God is still there equal to the occasion with His wonderful resources of redemption. The story unfolds and each page shines with the presence of God. The brightest character of the ante-deluvian world, holy Enoch, is distinguished by the fact that he walked with God, and it is more than Enoch we see. Abraham is but a little child stepping out into the unknown, holding the hand of God. Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, all represent the peculiar presence and personality of the infinite and ever-present God. The whole story of the Old Testament is a constant revelation of God amid all the changing scenes and overruling all the elements and forces of evil as well as good. The New Testament brings to us the vision of God in the face of Jesus Christ and leaves us with the Holy Ghost as the perpetual Presence of God in the inmost heart and life of every believer.

But the God of the Bible is more than this. To believing souls He is not only God but our God. This Book is more than a mirror. It is a love letter with your name inscribed upon it, a bankbook by which you draw from your great deposit all that it promises. The only way to make the Bible interesting is to learn to read it with your own name in it and to see in every promise a direct message for you. Would you meet God every day? Go to this precious Book for a personal word morning by morning and evening by evening and you will learn to prize it, to mark it as the memorial of life's crisis hours and the history of your own experience.

Third, we may find God in His providences, in the things that come to us day by day. Faith learns to recognize God in everything in some sense, even the things that come from the adversary and the hostile world. Every difficulty that meets us is but a challenge to prove the resources of our heavenly Father, but a vessel to hold some part of His usefulness, an occasion to prove that there is nothing too hard for Him, nothing too great for Him to undertake, nothing too little for Him to care about. Thus we find God not only in our blessings as we call them and the obvious tokens and gifts of His goodness, but in those things which are blessings in disguise, the trials, the sorrows, the obstacles, the adverse circumstances, the very temptations and conflicts that are pressed upon us by our relentless foe, the devil. It is possible to learn to look upon all these things as but tests that come to us from our Father's hand and opportunities of proving His love and power to help us; and, if we so receive them, it will come to pass that the most delightful remembrances of our lives will be the things that were most

trying because they shall have been transformed into blessings and triumphs. We shall learn to look over the head of the devil and see God above and beyond him, and by and by we shall be able even to recognize him in a sense our ally, as God takes our very enemy prisoner and makes him fight our battles and help to carry our burdens. This is the devil's greatest humiliation and the Lord's greatest glory.

There is a story told of an old lady who was praying for bread in a time of deep distress. Some rude boys heard her prayer, and thinking they would fool her they brought a loaf of bread and, ringing her doorbell, they slipped away and left it there. The old lady got the loaf of bread and immediately got down on her knees and thanked God for answering her prayer. This was too much for the boys and so they broke in on her and told her that she was only fooling herself, for God had not sent the bread at all but they had just brought it. "Ah," she said, "boys, I know better. It was the Lord that sent it even if it was the devil that brought it." There are so many things which the devil brings, but the child of God can see that God sent them.

Beloved, we greatly miss the discipline of life and the victories of faith if we do not watch for God in all the hard places that come to us day by day, and learn to rise from these to our sublimest victories, to take the stones of stumbling which the devil puts in our way or throws at us and build a tower with them which will reach to heaven. If you want to meet God this week you will find a hundred places awaiting you where you can either surrender to the difficulty or trust your Father for victory and go forward with thankfulness and praise.

Fourth, we can find God in His people. For the Church of Christ is His body and represents the very features of the glorious Head. It is "with all saints" that we learn to "know the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of Christ." It is a divine art to learn to recognize the Master's face in the faces of His children and the Master's presence in the common things of every day.

It is said a distinguished artist once was employed to paint the likeness of an empress. She was far from beautiful and yet he was expected to make a beautiful portrait. He visited all parts of the empire and took the portraits of all the beautiful women in the different cities, and out of these lovely portraits he made a composite picture representing all that was most striking and beautiful in each of them, and then, by an exquisite touch of art, he put into this composite picture the expression of the countenance of the empress, that subtle and peculiar something which belongs to a face which represents its personality. It was the countenance of the empress, but the features were those of all the princesses of the land.

In a higher sense the people of God are the images of the Master, and if we have both His faith and love we shall be able to find Him in His humblest disciples. Often when weary with service and even baffled at the throne of grace in finding the very thing we needed, have we gone forth to visit some sick and suffering child and found at that bedside the Christ we had been looking for and met in some simple expression, some incident, some word of message, some marvelous example of patient suffering or victorious faith the very thing we needed. We have met God. We have received the messenger wanted. We have received more than we gave, and we have gone forth deeply realizing that we have been with Jesus and that we have seen the Lord.

Fifth, we can meet God in the ordinances of His house, in the worship of the sanctuary, in the broken bread and memorial wine, in the hour of united prayer at the altar of public consecration, in the anointing service and baptismal flood, and in the ministries and services of His own house. There is a peculiar sense in which His promise is true, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Let us not make the mistake of forsaking the assembling of ourselves together or lightly esteeming the sanctuary and its services, for while God is present in the hearts and homes of His people yet He loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Israel.

Sixth, we can meet God in the secret place of the holy heart and the inner vision of the waiting spirit. This is God's favorite temple. While heaven is His throne and earth His footstool, His chosen sanctuary is the humble and contrite heart where He loves to come "to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." God is always waiting to meet the devout spirit in the inner chamber of the soul when we come by the new and living Way in the name of Jesus.

But there are some things that we must remember and do if we would really meet God in the secret place of the soul.

We must have the open face. "With open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." Many things may intercept the vision. One of them is the love of the world. The heart that is intensely fixed on earthly pleasure and worldly delights is incapable of seeing God.

Yonder the mighty telescope at the Lick Observatory had to be planted five thousand feet above the sea to lift it out of the mists of the lower air and bring it into the unobstructed vision of the heavenly worlds. Down on the plains of Sodom, Lot had no vision of God, but on the heights of Bethel, Abraham with nothing on earth but God to care for, received the covenant promise and the heavenly vision.

Again, the cares of the world, the anxieties of life are just as powerful to hinder the vision of God. There are many reading these lines who are so worried and distracted by a thousand earthly perplexities and troubles that their hearts are not at leisure to fix their eyes upon Jesus and behold the vision of His love. One look at Him, one sight of His almighty care would take away all your anxieties and give you the peace of God that passes all understanding. Oh, look up from your cares with open face and hear Him say, "Cast your burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain you."

Again, the fault may be some grosser sin. A heart steeped in earthly passion and unholy thought, imaginations, desires, purposes full of hatred, full of bitterness or full of impure desire, can never see God. "Without (holiness) no man shall see the Lord." "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."

We need not only the open face but the open ear, for God wants to speak to us, and He will not speak unless we are willing to listen. And so we find old Habakkuk saying, "I will set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." He was ready to hear and therefore God had something to say. He expected that he

might be reproved, instead he received messages of promise that became the keynotes of faith to the Church of God for all the coming ages. God will speak to us if we will hearken and He will always speak some word of love.

We need the open heart for He has said, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." God is waiting not only to speak to us but to sit down and feast with us, to bring His heavenly banquet for our supply and taste of our poor gifts and sup with us as well as have us sup with Him. But we must open the door. The heart must be yielded. The affections must be opened without reservation to the inmost depths of our being.

We must have the obedient and responsive will. "Whereupon," says the apostle, "I was not obedient unto the heavenly vision." God comes not only to tell us things but to have us do them. His visitation and messages are for a practical purpose, and He expects a practical response. Have we already obeyed what we know? Are we willing if He should meet us this day to gladly respond and say, "Lord, I will go; speak, Lord, for Your servant hears"? He came to little Samuel of old because He knew that Samuel would obey Him. He will come to you if He can find an open face, an open heart and an obedient will.

Finally, God shows us the vision of His grace and glory that we may take all He shows us and claim all He reveals. "All the land which you see," He said to Abraham, "to you will I give it." "We have received . . . the spirit which is of God," the apostle adds as an echo of the same truth "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." We know them first by the revelation of the Spirit and then we take them by the appropriating act of faith. So He is waiting today to show us the vision of His infinite grace and power and then to give us all He shows us. Lift up your eyes, beloved, and look far and wide and long and steadily. Take it all in, for all that you can see God will give you. Look out upon the hard places of your life and behold Him waiting to transform them into victories. Take in the whole circumference of His resources and promises and then say, "All is mine." It is as if a father should take his favorite child through some beautiful place and ask her to inspect and admire its treasures of taste and beauty and, after she had feasted her eyes upon it and expressed her admiration of its loveliness, he should hand her the key and say, "My darling child, all this is yours." And so He is saying to us, "All . . . which you see, to you will I give it." Let us look, let us take, and then let us use the fulness and the blessing all for Him and for those to whom He has made us witnesses and trustees of His grace and blessing.