

Articles and Sermons :: Jesus Christ Our Lord

Jesus Christ Our Lord - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/5/5 3:28

Christ the Power of God

by T. Austin-Sparks

"But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God...", (1 Corinthians 1:24)

"For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.", (1 Corinthians 2:2)

In many ways the explanation of Christ being the power of God consists in the fact that He is Christ crucified. This second reference by Paul to his emphasis on Christ crucified is immediately linked with the reminder that Christ is the power of God and largely the explanation of it.

The whole subject of spiritual power is most important. So many Christians find themselves involved in a continual struggle to live up to what they know to be God's standard. For them Christianity is a manner of life composed of various rules and regulations. They know what ought to be and what ought not to be, and they therefore struggle to attain to this level of living. Their consciences play a large part in this constant effort, and for this reason they suffer many fears and fail to experience the promised joys. Life for them has become a strenuous business, fraught with much disappointment and many failures. They may from time to time have a sense of attainment and success, with much resultant gladness, but with the fluctuating emotions of the soul, things seem to collapse and go all wrong. So it is that people find the Christian life burdensome; they long to know real victory, true deliverance and the joy of the Lord, whereas they experience the ups and downs of a constant struggle. The Christian life depicted in the New Testament seems so different from their actual experience that the Devil is never slow to pounce in with his suggestions that a life of constant victory is quite impossible, so that all their hopes are but unreal dreams. Satan wants God's people to despair of knowing His power.

But there is an altogether different life, different because it is based on the entering into something already completed in Christ; not something to be attained to but rather that which has already been accomplished. It is not a standard to be lived up to, but a Person to be lived with. It is impossible to measure the vast difference between these two kinds of life. The former is one of self effort and defeat, while the other consists in enjoying the reality of Christ the power of God.

We must beware of thinking in terms of advanced or special doctrines. Scriptural teaching is not departmental or sectional. We may hear of "higher truth" or "advanced teaching", as though there were something special reserved for the few. So there arises the idea of "higher life" with "higher teaching", as opposed to being a simple believer, content with "the simple gospel". I want very emphatically to contradict any such notion. Wherever you look in the New Testament you will never find any support for this idea. It is true that we have to face the call for overcomers, but surely the "overcomer" in the book of Revelation is only the ripe and full product of the work of Christ on His cross; it is only Christ in His fuller manifestation and expression. Overcomers are made possible because Christ is "the power of God". Just exactly as in the commencement of salvation, so in its triumphant consummation, everything is linked with the Lamb slain and the blood of the Lamb.

Nobody should make a special kind of "Overcomer" teaching, for this is what God intended Calvary to mean for every believer. God had spiritual victory as His thought when He first forgave us our sins, and in His mind this is to be the normal development of every Christian's life. Every movement forward, however, is related to the cross, and there is a sense in which there is not one step forward in the spiritual life which is not preceded by a step backward. What I mean is this, that there has to be some undoing before there can be any upbuilding. The Christ who is the power of God to us is the crucified Christ who progressively applies the cross to us also, so that being released from the flesh which so holds us back, we may advance in the realm of the Spirit. So spiritual progress is not conditioned by special teaching but by ever deeper experiences of the inworking of the cross of Christ.

This being true, we must recognise that everything is bound up with the Person, and must never be regarded merely as spiritual truth. Everything is bound up with Him. It is Christ who is the power of God - Jesus Christ and Him crucified. This explains the working of the gospel, which surely is that Christ crucified is revealed in the heart of the sinner who believes. We are not constituted gospel preachers because we have read somewhere the historic facts that Christ was crucified.

d, raised from the dead and ascended, but because God has revealed in us not just facts but a Person in relation to the facts and the facts in relation to the Person. This, then, brings me back to what I said at the beginning, namely that the life of struggling and failing in self effort is really due to a failure to appreciate the wonder and power of Christ crucified.

When the Holy Spirit comes into our hearts He brings Christ in the completeness of His finished work on the cross, and then proceeds progressively to conform us to Christ. Do you realise that the Christ in you is not an imperfect Christ? When the Lord Jesus wrought His Calvary work He not only dealt with the matter of forgiveness but He went right on to the perfection of redemption, finally reaching the throne as the great Overcomer. In Him, the Person, the whole ground of spiritual experience is covered and completed. There is no experience that can ever come to you or me which makes impossible the reaching of God's end, for Christ has already met and overcome it. So we are not to struggle in vain attempts after perfection, but to co-operate with the Holy Spirit as He seeks to make good in us the power of Christ's finished work on the cross. It is Christ in you who is the hope of glory. Anything less or anything else will bring no hope of glory but rather despair.

I would like to close on this positive reminder that the Holy Spirit has been charged with and has accepted full responsibility for the conforming of us to Christ. But we must recognise that power in relation to the Holy Spirit is not just an impersonal force but is vitally connected with Christ, and especially on the basis of the cross. For us the power of the Holy Spirit is inseparably bound up with the Person of Jesus Christ and depends on our willingness to accept the implication of union with Him in His cross. When the Lord was discussing this cross with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, the word rendered "decease" should really be "exodus" (Luke 9:31). Doubtless, then, we can correctly say that Christ's cross is a deliverance, a way out. It is the way out from condemnation, an elementary truth for the Christian but none the less a precious and important one. It is the way out from the power of sin. How can I escape from the bondage of sin which threatens me and seeks still to make me a slave even though I am a forgiven sinner? Only by death-union with the Lord Jesus, for it is His death which has made the escape, the exodus for all who trust in Him. Such trust involves the appropriation by faith of the power of that death as I am led into it in practical ways by the Holy Spirit.

In addition we notice that the Scriptures say that Jesus accomplished this exodus. It was an accomplishment on His part, something which He achieved. When we recognise this to be the nature of that death, we get a different conception from that of His just being killed, merely being crucified by men, and realise that this was a mighty work which He completed. He voluntarily took upon Himself all those powers which produce man's failures, defeats and bondage, and then broke through them all and accomplished a perfect way out by His triumphant death upon the cross. So it is for us to recognise that all our problems and enemies have been dealt with by the Lord Jesus in His cross. The Holy Spirit is given to us as the Spirit of His triumphant victory, full of energy and power to bring our besetting weaknesses to that grave where Christ has brought them, so that we may be freed for the will of God. I cannot master my sins but Christ has done it, and can draw me into the power of His delivering death. I can claim my share in the exodus. And this is not just coming into the light of some new doctrine, but sharing the power of a Person. It makes all the difference whether we are trying to deal with our troubles doctrinally or in the power of that Person.

Christ's death is also the way out from the bondage of law. You can have Christian law just as much as you can have Mosaic law; you can be in bondage in Christianity just as much as men were in Judaism. Christianity can be made into an imposed system just as much as Mosaic law was, and there are many Christians today who live under the fear of the "Thou shalt" and the "Thou shalt not" of a legalistic conception of the Christian life. You can take the Bible as God's standard for your life and try to fulfil it and yet still be burdened with a sense of constant failure. It is God's standard, and it is a very exhaustive one which leaves no part of the practical life untouched, but those who make the effort to try to live up to it only end in disillusion. No, it is not just a matter of a Book but of a Person, the Person who did live up to that standard, absolutely fulfilling every least demand with the most perfect success, so satisfying God to the full. By His death He has delivered us from the bondage of legal demands. This same Person now lives in us by His Holy Spirit, seeking to work out that perfect will of God not on the basis of some binding instructions from without but as a living force within. We have the law written in our hearts. To be in Christ is a matter of life and not of legalism.

CHRIST, and Christ crucified, is the power of God to bring deliverance from sin, from the flesh, from the law and from the world. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.", (Galatians 6:14). Paul was not glorying that he could enjoy so much of the world and yet have a clear conscience, but was enthusiastic about having been delivered from the world. For believers the only possible way of staying in this world is to know that they no longer belong to it. Not that we can deliver ourselves. No, it is much too strong for us. But in this matter, as in all others, the cross of Christ has made a way out for us. Alas that some Christians seem to want to hold on to as much of the world as they can without losing their peace of mind, giving up the minimum and holding on to all that they can without having their conscience too disturbed. This is not a powerful life, nor is it a glory

ous one. The glory of true fellowship with Christ crucified is the rich satisfaction of those who know the delivering power of the Christ and the new fullness of life in the will of God.

Re: Jesus Christ Our Lord - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/5/5 3:30

The Otherness of Christ

by T. Austin-Sparks

Dear friends, what is the Lord doing with us? That is what we want to know. What is He doing with you and me, and with those who are really in His hands? Is He not doing with us that which He has done with all who have come completely under His hands; that is, leading in a way and realm where human understanding and ability are completely confounded and exhausted, where it is totally impossible to cope mentally with His ways, or to explain Him? We cannot see, we cannot understand; neither is it in us to do, to achieve. We are learning that all our resources are of no avail and that everything depends upon the Lord Himself - His wisdom, His strength, His grace.

Well now, if it is your experience so far and at this time, understand that it is quite right, it is not all a mistake. True, it is very painful, it is testing. It is testing up to that point where your feet have to touch the very brink before you prove God. You have to come to an utter end of one way and to a beginning that is a beginning even to the point of lifting your feet to take a step to prove God, for God to come in. You say that is very utter. Yes, but it is this utterness of the difference between the Lord and ourselves that we have to learn, and that is going to set us over against the colossus of false doctrine, of the iniquitous lie which is being built upon this earth up to heaven, the lie of humanism.

That is the greatest lie that has been brought into this universe, that it is in man to be his own savior, that it is in man to rise to perfection, it is in man to be God; it is all in man, the roots are in himself. I say that is Satan's colossus of iniquitous untruth, and God is working out the contradiction of that in a company, in His Church. It is being wrought, worked out, in the unseen; and while it is so difficult to accept it in the day of suffering, weakness, and darkness and inability to understand, if we knew the truth the probability is that it is just this: God is doing with Satan in and through the Church what He did with Satan in and through Job, answering his challenge and his lie. Here is a broken, shattered, helpless little vessel of saints, bewildered, stripped, thrown back upon their God, unable to do or to understand, clinging to Him and seeking to prove Him, and through that the greatest iniquity in this universe is being assailed by God and answered.

The lie! There never was a time when that lie has reached greater proportion than it has today. But in you and in me, poor broken ones, God has His answer, and it does mean something to the Lord that we have been emptied out to the last drop, thrown back upon Him where He is our wisdom, He is our strength, He is our life, He is our very breath. That means something to Him.

Karl Barth has coined for us a phrase which has gained a great deal of strength and place, and it is a very useful one - "the altogether other-ness of Christ". Oh, that goes much further than we realize, certainly much further than most people are prepared to believe. Even yet in evangelical Christianity there is a clinging to the idea that we transfer everything to Christ and to Christianity when we are born again. We transfer all our faculties and our powers over to the interests of Christ and then, instead of using them for ourselves and for the world, we use them for Christ. That is the meaning of consecration, of surrender, as the terms are used so largely today in evangelical Christianity - the consecration of ourselves, our gifts, our faculties, our everything, to the Lord and to His service. But that falls short of something. It is not the transference and the consecration of everything that we are to the Lord to be used straightway as it is over on His side - for His interests instead of in the world. Christ is other yet, Christ is still different yet from consecrated natural life; oh, so other! Something has to happen, our entire mentality has to be changed, transformed. The mind has to be renewed; we have to have an altogether different kind of outlook, even about the things of God. It is a constitutional matter, not merely a directional one.

This is the meaning of the Lord's dealings with us; namely, to get a new mentality, a new conception; another, not our old one transferred, but another; and the distance is not the distance of time or geography necessarily, it is the distance of difference; and we make faster or slower progress spiritually according to how we learn this lesson. What is the secret of spiritual progress? It is the letting go of our own will and mind to the fact, to the truth, that after all, though Christians at our best, wanting to be a hundred per cent for the Lord, it is not in us either to be or do. Our will can never do it, our reason can never accomplish it, our impulses and desires can never get us there. We have to come to a brokenness and yieldedness where nature is laid low in the dust and all our treasure is with the stones of the brook and the Almighty becomes our treasure (Job 22:24-25); the Lord alone our wisdom, our strength and vision, our desire. Until you and I have learned the lesson of that utter brokenness and yieldedness and letting go to the Lord, spiritual progress is delayed.

May the Lord show us the great distance that lies between ourselves as Christians and Christ, and give us a heart that yields to the Spirit's work in teaching that lesson and making it good and bringing us more and more to the measure of His Son.

Re: Jesus Christ Our Lord - posted by Manfred, on: 2005/5/5 3:46

The Alpha and The Omega

by T. Austin-Sparks

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, which is and which was and which is to come, the Almighty.", (Rev. 1:8)

"And He said unto me... I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.", (Rev. 21:6)

"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.", (Rev. 22:13).

One of the titles which the Lord takes to Himself in resurrection is: "the Alpha and the Omega". The Lord Jesus here presents Himself as "the Living One", Who was dead, and is alive again - alive for evermore (Rev. 1:18). Those two letters, Alpha and Omega, are, as we know, the first and the last letters of the Greek alphabet. The one is the same in form as the first letter in our own alphabet; the other is unlike any of our letters. Alpha and Omega - First and Last. In every alphabet there is something which corresponds to an "A" and a "Z", an Alpha and an Omega, a beginning and an end. It does not matter how complicated the alphabet may be, or if it only contains a poor twenty-six letters as in English: everything is bounded by the "A" and the "Z", the Alpha and the Omega. You cannot get anything outside of that; all is within that. The Alpha and the Omega comprehend all speech; there is no speech possible in any language outside of what comes between those two letters. All that can be said has to come between their compass; outside of their compass nothing can be said.

No Knowledge Of God Outside Of Christ

Now Jesus says that of Himself: "I am the Alpha and the Omega". The Word of God tells us that Christ is the fullness of God, and that God will sum up all things in Him. What is more, it shows us that God will never speak to anybody outside of His Son, Jesus Christ. He has bounded all His speech to man by His Son; He has made Christ the compass of all; He has nothing to say, and He will say nothing, outside of His Son. "No one cometh unto the Father, but by Me" said the Son (John 14:6). "And no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.", (Matt. 11:27). The Apostle who wrote the Letter to the Hebrews began by saying: "In old times, God spoke in fragments and in parts and in various manners, by different men and at different times; but at the last He summed up all that He had to say in His Son. In the end, He has spoken to us in His Son, Whom He has appointed Heir of all things". All that God will say, and all that God can say, to us, will be in Jesus Christ.

"I am the Alpha". The very first syllable of the knowledge of God is the knowledge of Jesus Christ. It begins with A; it is the first lisp of a babe. "God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father.", (Gal. 4:6). The first syllable of the Christian life begins with "A" - "Father". We do not know the Father until we know Jesus Christ: He it is Who has revealed the Father. The beginning of all knowledge of God as Father comes to us through Jesus Christ. What He said in His prayer was indeed true: "I have manifested unto them Thy name", (John 17:6) - and that name was "Father". Do you want to know God? Do you want to know Him as Father? Do you want to know what He has to say to you, to make known to you? Do you want to know all or any of the vast wealth God would reveal to you? You can only know it in Jesus Christ; you can only know it in Him Who is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega. There is no knowledge without words made up of letters (except perhaps for our Chinese friends!), and all the letters are between these two. There is no knowledge that is knowledge indeed, knowledge that is life eternal, except in Jesus Christ. "This is life eternal, that they should know Thee the only true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send... Jesus Christ.", (John 17:3). There is no knowledge outside of Jesus Christ.

And there is no communication from God outside of Jesus Christ. Set Jesus Christ aside, and God is silent - He has nothing to say to you. If you fail to give His Son His place, God is just mute; He will communicate nothing. The more you honour the Son, the more the Father will come out to you and communicate with you.

All Need Comprehended In Christ

Secondly, Alpha and Omega not only comprehend all speech - they comprehend all need. You do not want anything outside of "A" and "Z"; you do not need to create any new letters; it is all there. It does not matter what big words you use - and there are some big words these days! - it does not matter how big the words, how long the sentences, or how great the utterances: you can meet the need of the biggest word, the longest sentence and the fullest utterance between Alpha and Omega. For all these big new words, you have no need to create new letters: all that you need are here.

We are told by the Apostle Paul that "in Him" - that is, in Christ - "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead", (Col. 2:9); "all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge", (2:3). "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell.", (1:19). We are very fond of that word of Paul's to the Philippians: "My God shall fulfil every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.", (Phil. 4:19). Every need supplied on the scale of His riches in glory - can we fathom this, can we compass this? - but every need met according to that in Christ Jesus. In Him is all we need; He is Alpha and Omega. When Jesus says: "I am Alpha and Omega", He is saying: "I am all you need. You never can have a need, you never can invent or imagine anything for which I am not sufficient. No situation can arise that exhausts Me: in Me all the fullness dwells. I am Alpha and Omega."

Christ: Agent, Pattern, And Goal Of Creation

Christ is the first and the last in creation, so says the Word. In that letter to the Colossians, to which we have just referred, the Apostle tells us clearly and precisely that "in Him were all things created", and that "He is before all things" (1:16, 19). The Apostle John, at the beginning of his Gospel, tells us the same thing, that "all things were made through Him", (1:3). He is the beginning in creation. In the Letter to the Hebrews, we are told that the ages were made through Him, the y came into being through Him (1:2). In this book of the Revelation, we read: "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God...", (3:14). He is the Alpha and Omega in creation: here He is the Alpha, the very Agent and Instrument of creation.

He was creation's design, for all things were made to be a temporal and material expression of spiritual and moral realities in the Son of God. If we had eyes and understanding to see the deeper secrets of an unfallen creation, a vast universe from the hand of God, we should see, in everything, something that speaks of the Son of God - His spiritual, His moral character, and His supreme place in the whole system of God. He is the pattern of creation: "Of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things.", (Rom. 11:36); and He is declared to be the completion, the finish, of the creation of God. He is the Alpha and the Omega.

Christ: First And Last In Redemption

All this is by way of setting the Lord Jesus in His rightful place in God's universe. But we may feel that it is not very helpful to us. What comes nearer to us is this: that He is the Alpha and the Omega in redemption. He is the First and the Last in redemption. In that letter to the Hebrews again, we have this familiar word: "Looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith.", (12:2). He is, then, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, of redemption.

Christ is, of course, the beginning of redemption in this simple sense, that there is no redemption until we come to Him. Just as there is no speech, no communication, no knowledge until we come to the alphabet, so there is no redemption until we come to the Lord Jesus. There is just nothing before "A"; there is nothing before Alpha: that is just where everything begins. And what is true in language is true in redemption: there just is no redemption, there is no salvation, until we come to the Lord Jesus. But when we come to Him, there is a new beginning. It is the beginning of everything - a whole new compass and range of possibilities, whether of communication, of knowledge and understanding, of wisdom or of pleasure.

What a wealth there is in Christ! What a wealth there is in Him as the Redeemer! When you take Him as the beginning, the Alpha, of salvation, what a marvelous world opens up! When you pick up a dictionary, and begin to turn the pages, what a world opens up! As you go on and on, through the many thousands of words, in all their different shapes and forms, what a world is there! I cannot understand any person who cannot revel in a dictionary! But you see what I am getting at. When you come to Jesus as the Alpha, a new and vast and wonderful world begins to open up, a world that you never thought of. It is like coming upon new words in the dictionary - words that you never knew were there, and that open up to you altogether new vistas. It is like that with the Lord Jesus: when He becomes your Beginning, an inexhaustible world opens up. Wealth, fullness, riches of knowledge - there are limitless possibilities when you begin with "A".

And there is no end to it! Just as there is something more being added every year to the dictionary, so it is in the Christiania

n life. I am not exaggerating. My experience through the years, and perhaps especially in recent times, is that Christ is just inexhaustible. There is more and more and more coming, all the time, that we did not know before. But it all began when we began with Him, and it has gone on ever since, and it is going on for eternity; for the Word says: "Of the increase of His government... there shall be no end... upon His kingdom.", (Isa. 9:7). No end! What a kingdom of fullness His is! But we have to begin with Him, we have to make Him our beginning before we can have any of it. He has got to be our 'Alpha'. But when once He is that, I say again, a new world opens up; a new fullness - and such a fullness! - begins to disclose itself. It is all in Him as our Redeemer.

This is what we have in the first chapter of the Revelation: titles of the Lord connected with Him in resurrection. And then we have words about what He has done in redemption. He "purchased unto God with His blood...", (Rev. 5:9); He "loosed us from our sins by His blood; and He made us a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father.", (ch. 1:5,6). It is the work of redemption which has opened up everything new - wonderful fullness! He is the Alpha of Redemption.

"The Author..."

Christ is not only the Beginning: He is the Beginner. It says here "the author": "looking unto Jesus, the author and perfecter...", (Heb. 12:2). He is the Beginner - the One who takes in hand this matter of beginning all over again and bringing us into a world that we have never known before. He is the initiator of it: it is in His hands: He does it. He has taken the initiative in our redemption; that is the point. I am so glad of that - so infinitely glad of that. With all that may be said about our quest - man's quest for God, man's search for God - that is nothing compared with God's search for man. What Jesus has come to reveal, and has revealed, is that God is the Seeker. Those wonderful and familiar parables about lost sheep, and lost pieces of silver, and lost sons (Luke 15), and other lost people: they are all meant to show us that God is the Seeker, that the initiative is with God. "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost.", (Luke 19:10).

Yes, He began this thing: you and I would never be rejoicing in salvation if He had not begun it. He said: "Ye did not choose Me, but I chose you.", (John 15:16) - and that is why we are now numbered among His saved ones. And if we are now among those that belong to the Lord, it is simply because He sought us. Whether we were seeking or not, He was the Seeker; He was the Beginner; He began. No one else can begin to redeem us; no one else can save. "There is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved.", (Acts 4:12); only His Name. There is no beginning of redemption without Him.

"...and Perfecter"

And Christ is the Last, the Omega, the end - in this sense, that, when He begins a thing, He finishes it. "The Lord", says the Word, "will perfect that which concerns us.", (Ps. 138:8). "which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.", (Phil. 1:6). He finishes what He begins. And He is not only the Beginner and the Perfecter, but Himself the Beginning and the Ending - the Finish. God is working all things to the end that we should be "conformed to the image of His Son", (Rom. 8:29). Christ stands, so to speak, right at the end; and God is moving and working in us, His people, in relation to that One who stands at the end, that we should be conformed to His image. The servant of God cries: "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.", (Ps. 17:15). It is that likeness that is the end: Jesus Himself is the End. All things under Heaven's government are working towards conformity to God's Son.

Christ Makes Sense Of Life

Furthermore: Christ, as Alpha and Omega, makes sense of life. I might have a tray with all the letters of any alphabet jumbled up in it. If I know what the letters are, and I know what I want, I can put them in an order so that they make sense. They express exactly what I want to express. All this that comes between "A" and "Z", between Alpha and Omega, makes sense when it is put in its right place. There are many people today who cannot make sense of life at all. The struggle of many is to try to make sense of life: What does it all mean? What is the explanation of it all? It seems all a jumble, a confusion, an enigma. Jesus makes sense of life: He puts the jumble into an order.

That is a description of the Divine design, the great purpose of God: to provide an explanation of everything. Yes, in Him we have the answer to our life's problems; in Him we have the setting in order of lives disrupted and confused. Has that not been true of so many? Men and women whose lives were all mixed up and confused, distorted and twisted, without any seeming design or pattern, meaning or explanation; they could not make sense of anything. And then they came to the Lord Jesus, and life made sense: a design, a pattern came in, and they came to realize what it all meant, what they were for. That is the testimony of those who are truly His. In the Lord Jesus, we have found a pattern, a design, for life; we have found a meaning in life, an explanation of life. He can bring into life a clear pattern, a new understanding. In Him, a

s Alpha and Omega, we have all that we need to make sense.

Let me repeat: Until you have your letters, your basic characters, there is no beginning, and there will be no sensible, meaningful end at all. Jesus just supplies that need - a beginning and a sensible end. He leads somewhere! When you and I at last reach the end, the end in glory, it will truly be a meaningful end, will it not? It will be an end that justifies everything, that gives meaning to everything, that explains everything. The thousand "why's" of lifetime will be answered, will all be explained. Why this experience and that? Why this sorrow and that? Why this disappointment and that loss? Why these strange ways in our life? It will all be answered in the end - and Jesus Himself will be the End! Yes, it will be a "sensible" end. We shall have no quarrel with God then, because Jesus will have put it all straight, and brought us to an end beyond our wildest expectations and altogether beyond our merits.

God Speaks To Us, And Through Us, By Life

Thus we may understand why, in the Bible, Jesus is called "The Word of God", (Rev. 19:13). God speaks in Him and by Him; always and only, and finally, in His Son. Perhaps you say, "That is all very interesting, but after all, how does He speak? Are we to hear Him with our ears?" No. If you come back to the context of these titles, you will find that it is resurrection life. "I am... the Living One;... I became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore.", (Rev. 1:17, 18). How does He speak? How do we know Him? How is life delivered from its tangle and confusion and brought into pattern and meaning? By His becoming our life! He makes us partakers of His own risen life. He puts that life into us which is an ordered life, a life of wisdom and understanding: a life, not of confusion, but of pattern. It is a life-power within us.

When His life is within, that life answers the questions, explains things, gives meaning to life. And while, to natural ears, life may be inaudible, life is really a very, very powerful speaker. It speaks louder, much louder, than words. Some poor suffering child of God may not be able to say much in coherent speech, but you have only to be with them for a very little time, and the life speaks to you. The very life that is in them speaks far more powerfully than words. It is the life that is within us which is the communication, the explanation, the wisdom of God: the power of that life working in us. By that life, God speaks to us, answers our problems.

So often, the answer of God to us is not in something that He says, but in something that He does - in some new touch of life. It is strange how, if we get that new touch of life in our inner man, we cease to worry about the problem - the problem is solved! We may not have got the answer to our questions, but we have got the answer: it is in life! It does not matter about the problem now; it is answered in this new touch of life. Life is God's way of speaking to us.

And life is God's way of speaking through us. People may come into a meeting, and they may have no idea what the speaker is talking about; and yet they might go away and say - "I didn't understand a word, but... but... there was something there!" They may not be able to describe it, because they are not familiar with the language and the phrases and the terminology. But they feel that they meet something there - something that answers to a need. Well, if they only knew, they would say: It is life, life, life! And that is the way that God really speaks. We would sooner have it that way, would we not, than that people should be able to understand a lot of words and phrases, and not feel the impact and registration of life. Better, of course, if both; but if we have to choose, better this way - that they go away and say: "There is something there that you cannot get away from; I can only say, it is God!" And what they mean is - it is Jesus Christ, the Living One!

That is the way God speaks through us. Oh that we may be, in this sense, the voice of God, the speech of God: the expression of Christ, Who is the Alpha and the Omega.