Sometimes we can become so sophisticated and so far beyond ourselves we run the risk of shedding that which ought to be most precious to us. Sometimes, perhaps, we hear of how well other churches are doing and we want to emulate whatever it is we think is contributing to their success. But I believe we are living in days when God’s people must seriously reassess, and be tremendously convinced of their calling. Christianity has developed into so many different and confusing shades and opinions. It’s almost like going to the supermarket and picking from the shelves what kind of concoction you would want your church and your faith to become.

I freely confess I would love to discover some way to bring more people in to our meetings. We are dwindling, and it is not looking good! I have often imagined us being in the large sanctuary and having it filled every Lord’s Day, - I would love to see that … not to feed David Greenaway’s ego, or anything like that … but it is a real joy and a privilege to open up God’s Word in front of great crowds of people who want to learn what it has to say. … Man’s chief end is to glorify God, and that is how we shall enjoy Him forever!

But I must recognise God does not see fit, - at the present time, - to grant us the desire of our hearts concerning many of our churches being filled. I still look to Him, and I believe He can do it … but sometimes we can feel like Christian in Pilgrim’s Progress who was on a journey and what he was experiencing here in the Palace Beautiful he was truly needing. We all need to be encouraged.

… Where does the believer find his/her greatest encouragement? … Surely, at the feet of Jesus. As Christian spoke with Piety, Prudence and Charity, he was anticipating sitting around the supper that was being prepared. … Let’s first of all consider …

**The Preparation** (‘when they had made ready … the table was furnished with fat things, and wine that was well-refined’)

We are speaking about the preparation being made for the Lord’s Supper. This was the highlight. How would they have been ‘made ready’? They would have come suitably dressed for the occasion. They had looked to those garments of righteousness the angels (the Shining Ones) had given them at the cross, and they would have made sure there was nothing of the dust of the journey clinging to them. They would have made themselves ready before they sat down at the Lord’s Table, - they would have examined themselves. …
The hymn describes it, “Are you walking daily by the Saviour’s side? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Do you rest each moment in the Crucified? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?” … If the Bridegroom was to come as you were seated at the Table, would your robes be white … and is your soul ready “for the mansions bright?”

And look upon the Table what has been prepared, and see the abundance of the delicacies. Isaiah prophesied, 25:6 in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. 7 And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. 8 He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it. 9 And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. 10 For in this mountain shall the hand of the LORD rest. … That will be the day when all the preparation for His coming will be completed. But until then, God’s people gather in anticipation.

As Christian and his new-found friends prepared themselves for the special supper in the banqueting hall of the Palace Beautiful, they knew there was coming a day when the Bridegroom would be with them. So, we see the preparation … and we also hear …

THE CONVERSATION (“all their talk at the table was about the Lord”) How different it would have been in Corinth, for example … where one tried to be better than the other and they were all talking about their own accomplishments… or even, how different it was in the Upper Room when each of the disciples took their eyes of the Saviour and wondered if they would be the one to betray Him. … At the centre of the Table is the Lord, and it is upon Him that the attention of each of His people must be, - nothing must remove Him from that place.

Here, in the Palace Beautiful they were no longer interested in Christian, - they had turned away from speaking about him ... All their thoughts were now upon the Saviour, - what He had done, why He did what He did, and why He had built that house. They knew the answers, of course. They knew He had died for them, - He Who knew no sin became sin for them to break them out from under the eternal yoke of bondage. He had been a great warrior, - He had fought with and slain him that had the power of death, - He battled and won the victory for His people. …
At that table on that evening they were sharing in the triumph of Christ on the cross *for them!* Yes, He even went to the lengths of placing Himself in danger … but He did it for the love of His people. … And He did not only die for my sins, He died for me, - He died in my place.

At the Supper the feast of fat things speaks of His sinless body that was broken, and the feast of wines speaks of His precious blood … *well-refined* as He intricately and carefully took the punishment for all my sins. … And all the conversation around the Table was of Jesus. … “He did it with the loss of much blood” … and you can hear the silence as they contemplated such a thought. … “Was it for me, for me alone, The Saviour left His glorious throne, The dazzling splendours of the sky? Was it for me He came to die? … It was for me, yes, all for me, O love of God, so great, so free, O wondrous love, I’ll shout and sing, He died for me, my Lord and King!”

That was what they were talking about … *the conversation*!

**THE MOTIVATION** (“which made me love Him more”)

As they looked and looked, - they did not stop or turn away their attention, - they continued to speak of Christ on the cross. This was personal. This was so real and up-to-date to each of them. Because of Him they were journeying towards Heaven. This time spent around the Table reminded them again of the great privilege He had blessed them with, “He did it with the loss of much blood”. I’m on my way to Heaven because of what my Saviour did for me at Calvary. He set His face to do His Father’s will, and therefore He is my Example so that I must not allow the world to distract me from fulfilling His purpose of bringing me home to Heaven.

Christ died for me for He loved me … and I want to go to Heaven because I love Him. That was their conversation around the Supper table! “He did it out of pure love to this country”.

I’m heading towards Heaven not because I have ‘turned over a new leaf’ in my life … not because I’ve become a good person … But I’m heading towards Heaven because it was the will of my Father to send His Son to redeem, - to purchase, - my soul at Calvary … and Jesus fulfilled the purpose for which His Father had sent Him. Therefore, through wonderful free, sovereign and electing grace, He has done more than sufficient for me to “love Him more”. **The motivation.**
THE AFFIRMATION (“there were some of them of the household that said they had seen and spoken with Him since He did died on the cross”)
Such is the testimony of every born again believer, for they have met with Jesus personally and they are assured Christ died for us according to the Scriptures (Rom. 5:8). … And He is the “lover of poor pilgrims”. “Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling”. There is no other gospel that compares with the Gospel of Christ. He is God’s eternal Son, the Lamb slain from before the foundations of the world. He stripped Himself of His Heavenly glory to die on the cross. Such was the everlasting plan of God to redeem His fallen people. …

And then consider the words of their affirmation as they continued to speak, “He would not dwell in the mountain of Zion alone”. God, - Whose presence has always been full and complete in Himself, - decreed the plan whereby “He would not dwell in the mountain of Zion alone”. Consider what that means. For all eternity God was in the solitariness of His own perfect and wonderful glory, - completely satisfied, - and yet He sent His Son with the promise to His people, Jn. 14:3 I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. This promise was for the people for whom He had come to earth to purchase, at the great price of His own sacrifice! Pilgrims like Christian, - pilgrims He had taken from the City of Destruction, - He had made them into princes! Even “though by nature they were beggars born”, He had destined them to be kings, Rev. 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father. … Aye, even though “their original had been the dunghill”. Ps. 40:2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. 3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God

The preparation, the conversation, the motivation, the affirmation …

THE SATISFACTION (“Thus they discoursed together till late at night”)
It was their whole conversation … They spoke about nothing else all night! And after they had finished, they committed themselves to the Lord for protection. This was the best of company Christian was enjoying! He had never met these people before … but they had all things in common because they had Christ in common!

 Afterwards, they brought Christian into a large upper chamber that was known as “Peace”. He slept there in Peace all night, - not simply because he was tired … He slept all night because he was satisfied. …
This was the place where God had led him, “I am resting tonight in this wonderful peace, Resting sweetly in Jesus’ control; For I’m kept from all danger by night and by day, And His glory is flooding my soul!”

He slept all night, - “he slept till break of day”, - and when he awoke in the morning, his attention was immediately arrested as he looked out through the “window opened toward the rising sun”. John Bunyan has a message for us there too, for the picture he draws reminds us of how Malachi wrote concerning the ‘rising sun’, 4:2 unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. … There was a brand new promise! He began to sing, “Where am I now? Is this the love and care of Jesus, for the men that pilgrims are, Thus to provide that I should be forgiven, And dwell already the next door to Heaven?” … “Next door to Heaven”! The joy he had experienced as he talked around the Supper table on the previous evening continued to live within his soul! … And it wasn’t over yet, - they had a few things more to show him before he would continue on his journey.

It emphasises again how we need the company of our brothers and sisters in Christ to encourage us and point us on the way, in the will of the Lord. Each one of us has a joy and a responsibility toward the other. We are on the journey together. As we said at the beginning of our study, it’s all-too-easy to become caught up with the things of the world and drag them into the church … but we are much more privileged than that. Christ has saved us, He has sealed us, and He is strengthening us to bring us home. And that is when His will for us concerning this world will be completely achieved, - when He shall have us gathered round that marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). On that day, He will lead us in before His Father … and we shall be sanctified and cleansed to Heaven’s perfection. He will then present us as His own glorious church [His Bride], not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but … holy and without blemish. (Eph 5:27) … and then, - and only then, - we shall be at home!