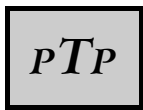


The Collected Writings
of H. H. Snell

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Preface

Hugh Henry Snell was born in 1815; and, as the last paper of his (found in the section of papers on F. E. Raven herein) indicates, he went to be with the Lord in early 1892. It has been said that he was a Doctor, but eventually entered a full-time ministry of the Word among saints. His adherence to divine principles regarding holiness in God's house is attested in the last two papers (letters) found in the section of papers on F. E. Raven. Would to God that more of His saints would unswervingly practice the principles brought out just before he passed into the presence of the blessed Lord He faithfully served for so many years.

A number of persons have kindly supplied copies of some of the material found in this volume. Also, a number of hands have worked on scanning papers into a computer, and on proof-reading, to provide *The Collected Writings of H. H. Snell for you*, looking to the Lord to bless this ministry for your spiritual profit. This collection has given opportunity to supply a Scripture Index and a Subject Index to these writings, enhancing its value as a helpful reference when looking for some thoughts on some matter.

Not included in this collection is an early magazine that the British Library indicates he edited, *Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones*, of which the publisher has 'Xerox' copies of five volumes (1853-1857) -- perhaps all there are? Also not included is a magazine that he edited called *The Evangelist* -- the British Library lists two sets of three volumes, 1864-1866, and 1867-1869, both sets referred to as three volumes, New Series.

Chapter and verse references in H. H. Snell's writings have often been changed to the book, chapter, and verse -- to facilitate making a Scripture Index. And other than modernizing some spelling, the reader is assured that the text has not been changed. Additions are found in braces { }, making it quite clear what was not in the original text.

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On the Inspiration and Divine Authority of the Scriptures; with Replies to Some Alleged Discrepancies

Preface

The following pages contain the Substance of Lectures which were lately delivered in Montgomery Hall, Sheffield, with the view to meeting the flood of infidelity as to the inspiration and divine authority of the holy scriptures, which has of late been overflowing Christendom.

It is hoped that the reader will not fail to turn to the various passages of Scripture to which reference is made.

The prayer of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, for God's blessing on this little service, are cordially invited.

H. H. S.

Sheffield, 1889.

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Introduction

Our Lord, when speaking of the scriptures, said, "They are they which testify of me"; and when the Spirit of truth is come, "He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." It is clear then that those who are led by the Holy Spirit into the true teaching of scripture, will have the Lord Jesus Christ ministered to them. How can it be otherwise, for is He not emphatically "THE TRUTH"? Is it possible, then, to overrate the value of such divinely-given landmarks?

Atheists and Deists have long indulged in throwing their invectives against the sacred volume. Every now and then a Voltaire, a Tom Paine, or some other of that stamp, has been the avowed champion of infidelity, and has made no secret of his blasphemies; so that faithful men of God knew whom they had to encounter, and what they might expect from such. But now a far more effective class of instruments are actively employed in seeking to undermine the infinite worth and divine authority of the inspired word; and, we blush to add, not a few of them are the professed ministers of the gospel. The fatal mischief is wrought too, not as formerly by ignoring the Bible as a whole, as much as by various persons leveling their attacks on different portions of divine revelation; so that at this time there is scarcely a fundamental truth of scripture that is not being either questioned or denied in some part or other of Christendom. The days of evil have indeed come. The emissaries of Satan are active. Everything that can be shaken is on the move. Rationalists are busy. Distrust and incredulity abound; and many are fearful as to what may be coming next. And why all this? Is it not because they have not known "the truth"? Our Lord said,

I am . . . the truth.

And ye shall know *the truth*, and *the truth* shall make you free . . . If *the Son*, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

This only is true freedom (John 14:6; 8:32, 36).

The root-error of all this departure from the truth, is doubtless the refusal to accept the divine verdict that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," and receiving instead the false notion of human competency to judge of the things of God; thus ignoring our fall through Adam's disobedience. For matters of this life, no doubt men have natural abilities; but we are plainly told in scripture that "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11). Even the apostles, who were "able ministers of the New Testament," with marvelous gifts and qualifications, were wont to say,

Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to *think anything*, *as of ourselves*; but our sufficiency is of God (2 Cor. 3:5, 6).

If such mighty men of God declared their inability to *think* a right thought apart from the teaching of the Spirit, how appalling is it in these days to find so many relying on learning and natural ability, and expressing their opinions of the scriptures with such temerity and boldness, instead of humbly owning and relying on the gracious ministry of "the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him," and thus

receiving in faith God's testimony.

It is scarcely possible that Scripture could speak more plainly than it does on this momentous subject. We say nothing against learning and human talent for worldly things, but in reference to the things of God another Scripture says that believers have

received . . . the Spirit which is of God; that we might *know* the things that are freely given to us of God . . . But the natural man [observe it is the *natural* man] *receiveth not* the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:12, 14).

How truly this is verified in these days! Let us not fail to notice further that one must be "spiritual" (under the guidance, teaching, and power, of the Holy Spirit, who occupies the soul with the Lord Jesus where He is), to discern the things of God.

He that is *spiritual* judgeth [or discerneth] all things (1 Cor. 2:15).

No doubt most of the confusion in Christendom as to the Scriptures can be traced to confidence in human wisdom, instead of honoring the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It would be impossible for those who are born of God to advance opinions, or value those of others, as to the plain testimony of the written word, much less would they confer with known sceptics and Deists, if they knew in their own souls the teaching and power of "the Spirit of truth." To question the divine authenticity of the holy Scriptures (alas! how few think it), is to refuse God's word, God's Son, and therefore God's salvation. We are told that our Lord,

beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:27).

Men may boast of "modern thought," and "intellectual progress," and style themselves "an advanced school"; but we are persuaded that a solemn crisis is not far off. The question throughout Christendom, already beginning to be heard far and near, is, "Is the Bible God's revelation of His mind and will? or, Is it merely a collection of the writings and opinions of good men?" Many of the adversaries of the truth lavish their praises on its being "the best of books," but such compliments are unnecessary and unacceptable. Are the Scriptures the utterance of God's mind, which came by His will, and not by the will of man, which holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost? If not, there can be no faith, no divine ground on which the soul can rest. But, having His own word, and knowing His perfect love and faithfulness in the accomplished work of the Lord Jesus, and having heard and received the gospel of His grace, the soul rests in perfect peace before Him, and can rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The believer is not called on to define Inspiration. How the Scriptures were inspired has not been revealed. It is enough for him that by them God is made known, that holy men of God testified by "the Spirit of Christ which was in them," and

that they minister Christ to his soul. Our Lord, too when speaking of us to the Father said, "I have given them thy word." After that, we read that the apostles and brethren prayed that they might "with all boldness speak thy word," and were so answered, that "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the word of God with boldness." Believers knew that the ministry in old time, and also by our Lord and His apostles, was the ministry of "the word of God."

Neither are believers called on to solve all the mysteries and difficulties of the Scriptures. They may know but very little of the Bible; but they find it therein revealed, without a shadow of question, that Jesus the Son of God "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"; and that "by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses," and they are filled with "joy and peace in believing."

How plainly we can "see the day approaching"! The cry of "peace and safety," the prelude of sudden destruction, well-nigh encircles the habitable earth. "The times of the Gentiles" are rapidly being fulfilled. Not a few have departed from the faith. The cloud which has been so long hanging over Christendom, thickens and lowers with incredible rapidity. The disciples of modern infidelity are being multiplied. "The way of Cain," or approach to God without blood, is becoming largely accepted. The name of Christ is unblushingly attached to unscriptural efforts, in order that they may be accredited; and "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof," from which the faithful are enjoined to "turn away," is spreading itself far and near. The numberless confederacies of men on all sides may be casting their shadow, to intimate that the binding of the tares in bundles is not far off. Nor can we fail to see that the hostility between confessed infidels and formal professors of Christianity may possibly be the harbinger of that great collision ere long to have its solemn fulfilment. when they will

hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire (Heb. 10:25; 1 Thess. 5:3; Rev. 17:16).

It would be impossible at this time for the faithful not to "sound an alarm." We are to "warn" as well as "comfort." Neutrality is out of the question; for our Lord said, "He that is not with me, is against me." With those who are true to Him, the supreme authority of Scripture will be maintained at all cost. Its intrinsic perfection and excellency have been tasted and enjoyed by them, and they know the Shepherd's voice. Christ Himself, their life and righteousness, is their resource; His Father is their Father, who loves them as He loved His Son. The Holy Spirit is their Teacher, Guide and Strength. Their watchword is, "It is written," and they find real delight in serving the living and true God, and waiting for His Son from heaven. They know that "the night is far spent" and "the day is at hand."

That the Scriptures have been marvelously preserved for us to the present moment is an unquestionable fact; but what means God has employed for its accomplishment is another thing. Certain it is as to the Old Testament that to the Jews "were committed the oracles of God"; and it is most

interesting to observe how scrupulously pious Jews have sometimes guarded the sacred treasure, and also that the books which they still accredit as divinely inspired correspond with what we call the Old Testament, though the books are not bound up together precisely in the same order.

The pretensions of Romish or Anglican churches to be the appointed custodians of the Scriptures, and that the decisions of their councils gives them their authority, is as gratuitous and unfounded as anything can be. Where is there a line of Scripture to warrant such a conclusion? We are well aware that our opponents would say, "Hear the church"; to which we reply, though that Scripture gives church or assembly authority in case of discipline, it gives not a shadow of warrant as to the oracles of God being now committed to the church. The words, "Hear the church" are found only in Matt. 18, and refer to an offending brother, who having been told of his trespass by the offended one *alone*, and not having been gained, then, having his fault again brought before him in the presence of *one or two more*, and having neglected to hear them, the assembly or church must then be told of it, and

if he neglect to *hear the church*, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.

Now, honestly, whatever has this to do with the church being the custodians of the Scriptures, and to decide on their authority? Instead of the church giving authority to the Scriptures, it is really the Scripture which, in cases of discipline gives authority to the church.

Another word brought forward of late to bolster up this tradition of men is quoted from Luke 10:16, when our Lord on sending forth the seventy to preach the glad tidings of the kingdom (for the Messiah was there, and ready to set up His kingdom), said, "He that heareth you, heareth me." Now where is there any allusion to the church or its authority here? To receive or reject the servant being to receive or reject the Sender has always been true, as here it is the servant being heard because he came to them in Messiah's name. We know from Matt. 16:18 and other Scriptures that the church on earth was not then in existence, nor could it be till the Holy Spirit came down, as recorded in the second chapter of Acts.

Again, refuge is taken by the opponents of the truth in the words,

the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (2 Tim. 2:2).

These words are found in Paul's last epistle to Timothy, when all Asia had turned away from him, and a prominent fellow-servant had forsaken him, and loved this present world. The Church had long gone on as God's corporate witness on earth, and had deeply failed, and nothing would have been easier than for the aged apostle in prospect of martyrdom to have commended Timothy to church authority; but instead of that, he calls upon Timothy to look out for individuals in the church on earth whom he can judge true to the Lord, and commit the truth which he had received from the apostle to such as he could call "faithful men," so that they might be able to teach others also. Timothy could not fail so to understand it. There is no thought of church authority in the passage. Nor is

there such an idea here or elsewhere in Scripture as that “the church teaches.” Instead of the church teaching, the church is taught by the “gifts” received from Christ in ascension; and in the prospect of ruin and difficulty in the church looked at as God’s corporate witness on earth, we are directed to the Scriptures and their sufficiency as our resource in a time of evil in the last days (2 Tim. 3:15-17; see also Eph. 4:8-16). From first to last in the sacred writings their divine authority is set before us. Even when Paul preached, who had received his commission directly from the Lord Himself, as he says, “not of men neither by man,” the Bereans were specially commended by the Holy Spirit, because they searched the Scriptures daily, “whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11, 12). How important it is at this time to see that instead of the church giving authority or adding any value to the written word, it is that word which is the only authority in the church, and is sufficient to guide, instruct, and correct every believer and furnish him unto every good work.

The truth is, that “the faith once delivered,” instead of being deposited to the care and authority of a corporate association -- the church -- we are plainly told was once given “to the saints,” so that every believer (for all such are “saints” by calling) has received this wondrous endowment from the Lord, and is under obligation to Him to “contend earnestly” for it, and maintain it at all costs for His honor (Jude 3). When the word of eternal truth is not heeded in its divine character, as the daily resource and guide, men and books will be almost sure to be resorted to, and will usurp the place of “God, and the word of his grace,” in the heart and mind, with great loss and damage of soul. “To obey is better than sacrifice”; and to heed and keep the “words” of the Son of God is the proof of our loving Him; and an apostle was wont to exhort believers to “be mindful of the *words* which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Savior” (John 14:23; 2 Pet. 3:2).

{1. Preliminary Remarks}

On the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures

If when Moses saw that the burning bush was not consumed, he was told to put his shoes from off his feet for the place whereon he stood was holy ground, with what humility of mind, and holy reverence, should we approach the consideration of the imperishable and unalterable word of God which has been written for our instruction; especially when we remember our entire dependence on the Holy Spirit to receive, reveal, or communicate the things of God!

God knows our total inability for searching His deep things apart from the operation of the Spirit of God; but the Spirit having been given to those who believe, we may now not only know the things that are freely given to us of God, but are enjoined to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” God’s own revelation of His mind has not then been given merely to gifted preachers or teachers, but is the common property of the saints -- of all those who are called of God by the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ. To such

it is God’s wondrous gift. It is the present heritage of all His children. To neglect “the faith once delivered” is therefore to dishonor Him, and plainly shows that the heart is on something else. To prize it beyond all else here should distinguish us. Not to find the deepest interest in the pages of holy Scripture argues that we ponder it but little. It is well to read it; but to meditate on it night and day with delight is what God gives to those who seek increased acquaintance with Himself through His word. Happy are they who can truly say, with one of old,

How sweet are thy *words* unto my taste yea, sweeter
than honey to my mouth (Psa. 119:103).

With what lowliness of heart, then, should we approach the sacred volume, and with what gratitude to God for having given us such a treasure; with what godly fear, too, lest by an improper thought or utterance we tarnish the glory of its infinite perfection! When we consider that these “words of God” shall shine in all their unchanging brightness and eternal worth when heaven and earth shall have passed away, how can we but tremble lest by ignorance or weakness on our part we mar the testimony to the truth of God, or hinder its blessing to others?

If we think only of ourselves -- our infirmities, our failures and unworthiness, how could we ever go forth to “fight the good fight of faith”? But when we consider that God has caused the Scriptures to be written for our comfort, that the apostle desired that “the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified,” that by it sinners are begotten of God, and His saints corrected and built up, we can then confidently cast ourselves on the loving care and upholding goodness of our gracious God, and reckon upon His tender mercy. Nor would we, by grace, forget that He has said, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isa. 61:2). May this be the state of heart in which we ponder the inspired volume! for

A glory gilds the sacred page
Majestic, like the sun;
It gives a light to every age --
It gives, but borrows none.

The hand that gave it still supplies
The gracious light and heat;
Its truths upon believing rise --
They rise, but never set.

2. What is Inspiration?

By inspiration we mean that which is God-breathed. We are told “all [or every] Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” It might be rendered “every Scripture is God-breathed” (2Tim. 3:16). The Scriptures are therefore a revelation from God; and their force or authority to our hearts and consciences flows from that fact. If Scripture be not God’s word, it has no more value to us than the writings of good men; but it is His word, hence it comes to us with the authority, love, wisdom and holiness of God. Though its pages run over thousands of years, take us back before time was, and lead our thoughts on to the eternal state, and some of its books were written more than three thousand years ago, it is unlike any other book, for it is

always new. Take up an ordinary volume of human composition, written two or three hundred years ago, or even go back to one of the Fathers, and you will find you have scarcely patience to read a few pages; but Scripture, as we have said, though old, is always new. It carries with it a freshness and power to the heart and conscience, as no other book does; and all the changes in the world and in mankind never seem to affect it. It warns us against “men” and their “philosophy,” ritualism and its imposing ordinances, and of putting “tradition” in the place of authority instead of Christ. While addressing itself to the heart and conscience, it has always a voice of instruction and blessing to those who believe and receive its words from the mouth of God. Those who do not believe, cannot understand it, for “by faith we understand.” Such only know its blessedness. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,” and we have “joy and peace in believing.” To the rationalist Scripture is inexplicable, to the ritualist it is confusion, to the infidel it abounds with mistakes, to the literary man there are inaccuracies and contradictions. Such, however, little know that God hath said that

the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

The Bible is the only book that faithfully tells us what we are, and that even to the discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This shows it to be divine, for God only searches the heart. It also truly reveals God, so that when the word is received, it brings our souls into the consciousness of God having to do with us. This also shows its divinity, for “the world by wisdom knows not God.” The variety of aspects in which the Son who came forth from the Father to save sinners is presented to us -- His personal glory, moral perfectness, finished work, walk, words, ways, life, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification, present offices, and future judgments and reign -- as the leading truths of Scripture, give it also a divine character. Its unity, too, carries with it the stamp of divinity as nothing else could. The way in which the different parts are adapted to each other; types in the Old Testament having their antitypes in the New; a multitude of prophetic statements in the former having their accomplishment in the latter, and the immense number of quotations in the New from the Old Testament, to prove the soundness of the doctrines taught, combine to give it a divine character which is incontestable. It is not then surprising that an inspired writer should commend “the word” to us as if in its operations it possessed divine attributes.

The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

A professing Christian lately said, “There are many opinions about the Scriptures”; to which we replied, “How can that be, if they are the utterances of God to us? for surely, then, we have only to hearken to His voice, and seek to do His will.” How little did this man think that he was, in the vanity of his mind, imagining that he was competent, as a fallen creature in

Adam, to sit in judgment on the things of God, and thus take ground with rationalists and infidels, instead of bowing to Scripture as God’s word, and allowing it to judge him. Alas! such is the pride of man in these last and closing days, that many prefer their own opinions to Scripture, and, as of old, make void the word of God, that they may keep their own tradition. Hence, also, the word is being solemnly fulfilled in men’s rejection of holy Scripture, that “seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).

If we have not “the words of God,” we have no basis for faith, and must therefore be tossed about with irremediable uncertainty; but having divinely-given communications, we have on their authority divinely-given certainty as to eternal salvation. By it we have present assurance, founded on the redemption-work of our Lord Jesus Christ, that our sins are forgiven, that we have eternal life, are the children of God, and shall not come into judgment (Acts 10:43; John 3:36; Gal. 3:26; Rom. 8:1). If such are asked why they believe on our Lord Jesus Christ? and why they have such certainty as to their present and eternal blessings? their reply will be “Because God in His word says so, and faith needs no other authority for confidence, and no other rest for the heart and conscience.”

The days are indeed evil and perilous. Time was when heathen idolaters were those who chiefly scoffed and mocked at the Scriptures being God’s own revelation of His mind; and later on, avowed infidels in Christendom treated the subject with scorn and ridicule; but in our day it is those who profess to be servants of Christ, and guides of the flock of God, who are so busily engaged in undermining the eternal verity of the holy Scriptures, and their divine authority. This, too, is seldom attempted as a whole by one person; but by different persons in various places, so that it may be, by Satan’s artifice, the less manifest. At this moment there is scarcely a vital and fundamental doctrine of Scripture, that is not being assailed or corrupted within the length and breadth of Christendom.

What has especially stirred many hearts at this time, is the consciousness of the appalling state of souls in the neglect of the Scriptures, and the skeptical thoughts that are current among professors of Christianity as to their divine authority. Not that we imagine that we have power to lead any to see and act differently, for we are told that “no man knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit of God.” The prayer, however, of not a few, has been that God will yet work by His word, and bless and help souls according to His own thoughts, and for His own glory.

3. Sacred Writings

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Cor. 10:11).

These two verses plainly teach us that in the apostles’ days

there were sacred writings, which they could speak of as *written* for our comfort and instruction. It is well, then, first of all, to see if we can gather from other parts of Scripture with certainty what these sacred writings were. As to this, one thing is very striking. It is the way in which our Lord in the days of His flesh referred to “the Scriptures.” Not only did He say, “Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, for they are they which testify of me”; but He was wont to appeal to His hearers, saying, “Have ye never read?” “Did you never read?” “What is written in the law?” “How readest thou?” “Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God?” -- all evidently referring to sacred *writings*. Moreover, He not only said, “Moses *wrote* of me,” but He was pleased to rank the “writings” of Moses with His own “words,” when He added, “If ye believe not his *writings*, how shall ye believe my *words*?” There were writings, then, which our Lord in His ministry frequently authenticated as divinely-given, which He honored and obeyed, and their authority was to Him final and conclusive. In point of fact, “It is written,” when quoting the very words of Scripture, was with Him the sword of the Spirit to resist Satan in all his temptations.

There were *writings*, then, which our Lord used, honored, and obeyed, and commended to His hearers as testifying of Himself, Scripture which must be fulfilled, and, because divinely-given, infinite, and pure, and holy. Now these were the books of the Old Testament, for the New Testament was not then in existence.

The external evidence of the divine authenticity of Scripture is very weighty, especially when we consider that to the Jews were “committed the oracles of God,” and from time immemorial to the present, it is well known that they have retained the different books of the Old Testament pretty much as we have them, and regard them as given to them by Jehovah. Our object now, however, is not to look so much at the external evidence, as to the internal testimony the Scriptures give of their being the word of God. It is interesting, however to know, that in the early centuries of what is called the Christian Era, there is abundance of proof from the writers of that time, that they quoted largely from the books of the New Testament. It is said also, that Lord Halles, a Scotchman, having searched the writings of the so-called Christian Fathers who lived during three hundred years after Christ, found, with all their blunders, nearly all the writings of the New Testament as we have them in different parts of their books.

The attempt to prove by human reasoning and external evidence that the Scripture is God’s word, would be just as absurd as lighting a candle to look at the sun. Every one knows, except he be blind, that the sun gives light and heat. We know nothing of the sun without these effects. So every honest mind that has ears to hear, and gets before God, finds Scripture so searching, that it commends itself to his conscience as being the word of God. He finds it quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.

4. The Old Testament

For ever, O Jehovah, thy word is settled in heaven
(Psa. 119:89).

Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name
(Psa. 138:2)

In turning to the earliest books of the Bible, we read on one occasion that “Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah”; that Jehovah said unto Moses, another time, “Write this law for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua.” Again, we read that Moses was commanded to *write*, and “Moses *wrote* this song according to the commandment of Jehovah, and taught it the children of Israel,” and that he also “wrote their goings out according to their journeyings, by the commandment of Jehovah” (Ex. 24:4; 27:4; Deut. 31:19-22; Num. 33:2).

Moreover, it is clear that Moses was conscious that the word he gave Israel had divine authority. He said, “It shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto *the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all the commandments which I command thee this day*, that Jehovah thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth.” His writings, therefore, are called “the book of this law,” and “the covenant,” and “his statutes which are written in this book of the law.” “And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests” (Deut. 28:1, 61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:9).

We find in the books of Moses such words as “Jehovah said unto Moses,” over and over again. Sometimes it is added, “Speak unto Aaron thy brother,” or “to the children of Israel,” or to the priests; and afterward we read it was done, and it is frequently said, “as Jehovah commanded Moses.”

Joshua also having been assured by direct communication from Jehovah of the divine origin and authority of the writings of Moses, was also taught that his own success in the service of God would be connected with his observing to do all that Moses commanded. He was told to

turn not from it, to the right hand or to the left.

. . . *The book of the law* shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to *that which is written therein*; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success (Josh. 1:7-9).

Thus the writings of Moses were not only authenticated by Jehovah, but Joshua was held responsible by God to obey them “according to all that is *written* therein.” It was all the Scripture that he had, and yet how careful he was to carry out its directions.

Joshua also was a writer. “He *wrote* upon the stones a copy of the law of Moses which he *wrote* in the presence of the children of Israel.” It is added that,

afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is *written* in the book of the law (Deut. 22:2; Josh. 8:32-35).

It is scarcely possible to have a clearer testimony to the inspiration and divine authority of the books of Moses.

The prophet Samuel also was a writer. He “told the people the manner of the kingdom, and *wrote it in a book*, and laid it up before Jehovah” (1 Sam. 10:25).

Isaiah, too, was a writer. We read that “Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amos, *wrote* the acts of Uzziah first and last” (2 Chron. 26:22).

“Jeremiah *wrote* in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon.” “And Jeremiah said unto Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt *read* all these words; then shalt thou say, O Jehovah, *thou* hast spoken against this place” (Jer. 51:60-62).

Daniel had wonderful things revealed to him by God in dreams, and visions, and by the angel Gabriel. We read that “He *wrote* the dream.” He also acknowledged the divine inspiration and authority of the ancient Scriptures, for he tells us that he “understood *by books* the number of years, whereof the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem”; and he also recognized the divine authority of what is “*written* in the law of Moses,” and “noted in the Scripture of truth” (Dan. 7:1; 9:2, 11; 10:21). Let us not fail to observe that Daniel speaks of the prophecies of Jeremiah as the words of Jehovah.

The sweet psalmist of Israel said, “The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and *his word* was in my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). “My tongue is the pen of a ready *writer*” (Psa. 45:1). The wise man also exclaimed, “Have not I *written* to thee excellent things?” (Prov. 22:20). The prophet Hosea said, “I have *written* to him [Ephraim] the great things of thy law” (8:12); and Jehovah said unto Habakkuk, “*Write* the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it” (Hab. 2:2).

Enough of quotations from the Old Testament we judge have been given to show, that *writing* was a means ordained by God for communicating and treasuring up divinely-given truth, and that its authority was acknowledged by the faithful in all ages. The people, too, were taught by God’s servants to give diligent heed to these writings. When the children of Israel should have a king, Moses said, “He shall *read* therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear Jehovah his God, to keep all the words of this law, and their statutes to do them.” Joshua also taught the people to “take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of Jehovah charged you.” We read also that in Nehemiah’s day, Ezra the scribe, when the people were collected together, “*read* in the *book* of the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the meaning” (Deut. 17:19; Josh. 22:5; Neh. 8:5-8).

From all these various witnesses, we not only learn that God had ordered writing as a means of communicating His mind and will, but, as a fact, we also find preserved for us in a most marvelous way for nearly two thousand years a number of books written by various persons who had no communication with each other; written, too, at different times, and under different circumstances for a period extending over 1500 years, and all the books so agreeing together that a spiritual mind can trace all as being under the guidance of a master mind: books that were valued by other prophets, treasured up by faithful men, esteemed by many as of more value than thousands of gold and silver, and ministering words

which were found and eaten to the joy and rejoicing of the heart. In these many books we find the prophetic words of some afterwards registered by others as fulfilled, and warnings unheeded, too, meeting with the predicted judgments; the depravity and utter ruin and wickedness of man set forth, and alas, manifested, while the nature of God, as love and light, His attributes and words of holiness, grace and truth, stand out in all their uncompromising perfection, and eternal excellence. Because of these things, the written word of the Old Testament brings such conviction to the soul of its divinity and eternal truth, when opened up and brought home by the Spirit, that the heart no more looks to men’s opinions, or other external evidence, than a child, when gazing with delight on a photograph of his living mother, would inquire who it is.

5. The Testimony of the New Testament to the Old

Let us now take a brief glance at the books of the New Testament, and ascertain what testimony there is to the inspiration of the Old Testament. We shall only take a few examples out of many.

In Matt. 1:22, we read, “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of Jehovah, by the prophet.” Observe, it is not merely that the prophet’s saying was “fulfilled,” thus to show how divinely true it was, but that it was “spoken of Jehovah.” Is it possible that anything can show more clearly that the prophet Isaiah uttered it by inspiration? In the next chapter we find the same expression (v. 15); “that it might be fulfilled which was *spoken of Jehovah* by the prophet” -- the prophet Hosea. In ch. 5, our Lord so authenticated the testimony of the Old Testament that He said, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” “The law” is sometimes used to include all the ancient Scriptures.

Mark’s gospel begins with quotations from the prophets Malachi and Isaiah, and in ch. 7, our Lord said to the Pharisees, “Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, *as it is written*, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me,” and charges them with rejecting “the commandment of God,” as in Exodus and Leviticus, and setting up instead, “commandments of men.” “Thus,” added our Lord, “making *the word of God* of none effect through your tradition.” Here our Lord calls the writings of Moses *the word of God* (vv. 6-13). In Mark 12 our Lord declares that David wrote Psa. 110, “by the Holy Ghost” (v. 36). Again, we ask, is it possible to have clearer proofs of divine inspiration?

In Luke 1, we see a man full of the Holy Ghost; his testimony, therefore, must be very important; we find him saying that “He [the Lord God of Israel] spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began” (Luke 1:70). In Luke 3, we have the testimony of one who was full of the Holy Ghost from his birth, of whom our Lord said, “Among them that are born of women, there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” Well, what about him? We read that at a certain time “*the word of God* came unto John.” What

word of God? "As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet," etc., (vv. 2, 4). In Luke 4, the Lord reads in the synagogue part of Isa. 61, and stops in the middle of a sentence, and closed the book and sat down, saying, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." What Scripture? "The acceptable year of the Lord." How? Because He came to call sinners to repentance (vv. 18-21).

In chapter 16, the Lord again most authoritatively enforces the authenticity of the writings of Moses and the prophets. He says, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them . . . If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (vv. 29-31). Is it possible that such language could be applied to any writings that were not given by God?

In John's gospel it is recorded that Lord recognized certain writings which called "Scriptures," which testified of Himself. He also especially taught that Moses *wrote* of Him. But more than that; He so recognized that Moses wrote them not by his own will, but by the Holy Ghost, that he ranked Moses' *writings* as of equal authority with His own *words*, when He said, "If ye believe not his *writings*, how shall ye believe my *words*?" In John 10, our Lord declared that "the Scripture cannot be broken" (v. 35), as He also said elsewhere "the Scripture must be fulfilled."

In Acts 1, the apostles are in a different state as to the truth, because our Lord after His resurrection had "opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures." Many men in our day think themselves quite competent to understand Scripture by natural ability aided by education; but it is a great mistake, for "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Did people believe this, how anxious they would be that God would reveal His truth to them by the Holy Spirit's power!

Well, Peter, the apostle, in Acts 1, gathered from Psalms 41 and 109, that another should be chosen ('ordained' is not in the Greek) to take the place of Judas the betrayer. His words show that he regarded the Psalms as inspired. He said to the others,

This Scripture must needs have been fulfilled *which the Holy Ghost* by the mouth of David, spake before concerning Judas (v. 16).

It was Peter who after this wrote,

We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place . . . for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

In Acts 2, Peter and the others have very much advanced spiritually. Why is this? The Holy Spirit had come down and taken up His abode in them, so that they were "filled" with the Holy Spirit, and had a power in ministry, and received gifts which were never known before. Peter stands up to preach! Now, what is it about? He first quotes from the prophet Joel, to explain that it was the coming of the Holy Spirit which had produced all this joy and power in them. He then goes to Psalms

16, 132, and 110, to show that the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ was a fulfilment of what had been written concerning Him many hundreds of years before; and we know what vast blessing accompanied this ministry. Observe here, that these Old Testament writings were given by the Holy Spirit, and expounded by one full of the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 3, Peter declares to the Jews that even then if they repent, turn to God, and have forgiveness of sins, Jesus will be sent down from heaven, and bring in millennial blessing as their true Messiah -- "the restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Here, again, it is "*God hath spoken* by the mouth of all his holy prophets." What could more plainly show us that these men were inspired by God to write? (vv. 19-22).

In Acts 4:24, 25, "*God*" is said to utter the second Psalm by the mouth of His servant David.

In Peter's sermon at Caesarea, when speaking of the Lord coming to judge, he says, "To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Observe, here, he includes *all* the prophets. We would only add as to Peter's testimony that in his first epistle, he refers to the Scriptures of the Old Testament as final and conclusive. With him, "it is written," was enough, and he quotes from, or refers to Exodus, Genesis, Isaiah, Psalms, Hosea, and other Old Testament writings. He enjoins his readers to be mindful of the *words* which were spoken before by *the holy prophets* (2 Pet. 3:2).

Now let us hear Paul's testimony. In his first memorable sermon at Antioch, he begins by running through the ways of God with the people of Israel, from Egypt to that day, and thus authenticates the books of Moses, Joshua, Judges, Samuel on to David, from whom he traces the Savior Jesus. He further refers to Old Testament Scriptures as to His death on the cross, in the brief statement, "when they had fulfilled *all that was written* of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulcher: but God raised him from among the dead." He then goes to Psalms 2, which shows that God sent and gave His only begotten, whom men rejected, and he quotes Psalms 16 to show that He saw no corruption. Paul's ministry here was founded on the divine authority of Old Testament Scriptures. It is well to observe that in those days preaching was giving out, not human ideas and eloquence, but "the word of God." Hence, we read, "almost the whole city came together to hear the *word of God*." "And the *word of the Lord* was published," and in the next chapter, "God gave testimony to the *word of his grace*."

In Acts 17 we find Paul preaching at Thessalonica in a Jewish synagogue, and according to his manner, he "reasoned with them *out of the Scriptures*." What Scriptures? The Old Testament; from which he shows that "Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from among the dead; and that this Jesus which I preach unto you is Christ." The result was that many believed. Now if we turn to the 1st epistle to the Thessalonian believers, we find Paul by the Holy Spirit writing to them, that he

thanked God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

Can any testimony more fully prove the divine inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures? for the apostle began his ministry to them from those writings, and now as the Lord's servant commends them for receiving the testimony as "the word of God."

Paul then carries the gospel to Berea; and we are told that the Bereans were more noble than those in Thessalonica; and why? Because they held that the Scriptures (then the Old Testament) were the only balance God had given to test everything by; so "they searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so." Yes, and they were commended for testing even the ministry of an inspired apostle by the Scriptures. Oh that people would do the same in our day! We should not then hear such words of unbelief, alas! so common, as expressing opinions on this and that Scripture, and asking others what their *opinions* are. The fact is, the opinions of men are often useless, and savor strongly of infidelity, because God has given us His own word. This, faith rejoices in. Never, then, let us forget this divine commendation of the Berean believers. Passing over much of Paul's testimony, we find him at length before king Agrippa. There he declares that he said

none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come; that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from among the dead, and should show light unto the people and to the Gentiles (Acts 26:22, 23).

In the conclusion of the Acts, we find him at Rome "persuading [the Jews] concerning Jesus both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets from morning till evening"; and ended by giving another testimony to the Old Testament Scriptures having been divinely inspired. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers" (Acts 28:23, 25).

Looking as briefly as possible into the epistles, we find the appeal to Scripture always final and decisive. In Rom. 3, man's utter ruin, all having "sinned," "all guilty," and "all under sin," proved by quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures. In chapter 4, when the question is raised as to whether a man is justified by works, Scripture is at once appealed to -- "What saith the Scripture?" And the writing of Moses, that "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness" decides it. But lest any should suppose there was a difference as to this, in those who lived under the law, David is referred to, to show that even such as lived under law had no righteousness before God, but that which is of faith.

Even as David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth *righteousness without works*, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Psa. 32).

In other parts of the epistle references are made to the prophet Habakkuk, Isaiah, and other prophets, besides the books of

Moses and the Psalms, as bearing divine and unquestionable testimony.

In the epistles to the Corinthians we see the same appeal to Scripture. Who would have thought that when Jehovah wrote by Moses, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn," it had any reference to the saints now in ministering to those who preach the gospel? But, saith the inspired apostle,

Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether *for our sakes*? *For our sakes no doubt this is written* that he that ploweth should plow in hope, and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? (1 Cor. 9:9-11)

In Galatians when false teachers had been seeking to undermine the gospel by mixing law with it, Genesis is again quoted to show that Abraham had righteousness only on the principle of faith; and to prove that now, those who "be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham," it is most authoritatively added, that "the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." Habakkuk also is referred to, and tells us that "the just shall live by faith"; Deuteronomy, that Christ has been made a curse for us, "*As it is written*, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," and has thus redeemed us from the curse of the law; and the inspired apostle further sets the Old Testament before us in its divine and infinite authority, by saying, "*The Scripture* hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe" (Rom. 3:6-22)

We cannot conclude our brief view of the apostle Paul's testimony to the sacred writings of the Old Testament, without referring to the epistle to the Hebrews. There in the first verse, he disperses all question on the subject, if any yet existed. "God," he tells us, has spoken "unto the fathers by the prophets." Nothing can be more conclusive and incontestable, for it is "God" who "hath spoken." Let not the reader fail to notice also, that in Heb. 3 and 10, the writer quotes from the book of Psalms and Jeremiah, and speaks of them as what the Holy Spirit saith. It need scarcely be added that a great deal of this epistle is a divine commentary on sacrifice, priesthood, approach to God, worship and communion as taught by types of the tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrifices offered according to the law. Rom. 11 also authenticates a great deal of Scripture from Genesis to the book of Daniel.

James appeals to Scripture as conclusive. He also brings the prophets before us without one exception who have spoken in the name of Jehovah; and quotes from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Joshua, and first book of Kings.

John, in his first epistle, gives us as a test to distinguish truth and error, the hearing of the apostles, "We are of God; he that knoweth God, heareth us: he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error." He authenticates the books of Moses by quoting from them. Jude also, in referring to Enoch and other parts of Scripture, gives these writings unquestionable authority.

Thus we have looked briefly at a few of the testimonies which the New Testament writers and speakers give as to the validity and authenticity of the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures. It is well not to overlook the fact, that the disciples were unintelligent as to the resurrection of our Lord, because "they knew not the *Scripture* that he must rise again from the dead": that is, the Old Testament Scriptures which "were *written* for our learning." Our Lord also told His two loved disciples going to Emmaus that they were in error because they did not believe the Scripture, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?"

Before we turn back to examine the ancient writings as a whole, it will help us to remember how our Lord set them as such before His disciples after He was risen from among the dead. Not only, as before observed, did He open their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures; but we are told that "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." What a marvelous exposition it must have been! Is it surprising that they said one to another, "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Yes, when He applies Scripture to our hearts and consciences it brings its own evidence of its divinity. When our Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria, she felt at once it was in a divine way, so that her conscience being reached she said, "Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet"; and on learning that He was the Messiah, she left all to go into the city and say, "Come see a man that told me all things that ever I did, is not this the Christ?" {John 4}. Our Lord in life said the Scripture cannot be broken; in death He consciously fulfilled Scripture and spoke of it; in resurrection, as we have seen, He brought Scripture to His disciples. Again, having eaten before them to show He was not a spirit but a body of flesh and bones, He said, "These are the *words* which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were *written* in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me." "Thus it is *written*, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." Our Lord not only testified to His having fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures in His death and resurrection, but He authenticated the entire body of writings in all their divisions of books of Moses, prophets, and Psalms; much as we still, through God's great mercy and guardian care, have them.

In looking into the books of Moses, we find that our Lord recognized their divine authority, and referred to each of them as such. We hear Him saying on one occasion, "Have ye not read that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female?" (Gen. 1:27). And again He quotes from Gen. 2:24, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh." He was Himself, as the woman's Seed, to be the fulfiller of the bruising of Satan's head, after He Himself had suffered from him. This we find in Gen. 3; as also in the typical clothing of man's nakedness through the death of Another; the result of the death of the cross. Our Lord also

spoke of the death of "righteous Abel," as recorded in Gen. 4; endorsed the doctrine of man's utter ruin of Gen. 6, when He said, "the flesh profiteth nothing," and "out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts," etc.; and largely dwelt on the details of the days of Noah and the flood as typical of the sad state He will find the world in when He comes from heaven to judge (Matt. 24:37-41). Our Lord also referred to Abraham, saying, he "rejoiced to see my day . . . and was glad," but asserted the divine glory of His Person, when He said, "Before Abraham was, I AM."

Our Savior also quoted the words of Jehovah,

I *am* the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; God is not the God of the dead, but of the living,

to show they were still spiritually alive and to prove the reality of the resurrection of the body, and thus refute the false doctrine of the Sadducees; and this Scripture also authenticated their patriarchal history as detailed in Genesis (Matt. 22:32). The tabernacle, with its priesthood and sacrifices, gave much typical instruction as to our Lord's death and High Priestly office for us.

The Lord's death was the fulfilment of the typical sacrifices of Leviticus, and He often quoted from it; and from Numbers also, for most will remember that He used the lifting up of the brazen serpent in the wilderness as a simple illustration of faith, and the effectual and everlasting blessing those have who in their need and danger look simply to Him as the Object of faith. From Deuteronomy our Lord took words, and used them with "It is written," to overcome the devil in his temptations. Thus the Lord practically authenticated all the books of Moses as God's words, and repeated that we should live "by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

We have lingered over the writings of Moses because of the bold attacks that have been made on them by learned sceptics. It is asserted by some of them, that it is *only* the first five books of Scripture to which they object; but as the writings of Moses are quoted as having divine authority throughout the Old and New Testament, to disallow them as not divinely inspired, is not merely to lose them, but to deprive us of all the Scriptures. This, no doubt, was anticipated by our Lord who knew all things, so that He said, "If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" It is most interesting, however, to know that Joshua is not only told to obey Moses's writings, but at the end of his course as Jehovah's servant, he records the history of the children of Israel from the call of Abraham to that time (Gen. 24). About a thousand years after that, Nehemiah also recorded their history from the call of Abraham, traces them out of Egypt across the Red Sea, through the wilderness under God's care and goodness for forty years, their ways of disobedience in the land, and God's deliverances; and adds that, "*God testified against them by his Spirit in the prophets.*" Thus He authenticated not only all the books of Moses and Joshua, but all the prophets before His time (Neh. 9). Nor should it be forgotten, that the facts in the history of the children of Israel, recorded in the books of Moses, right on to their captivity, are

taken up in detail in the Psa. 78, 105, and 106, thus endorsing many of the books of the Old Testament as divinely authenticated. In the divisional part of the Old Testament called "the Psalms" are included the book of Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations of Jeremiah, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and 1 & 2 Chronicles.

In reference to the book of Psalms, our Lord quoted from Psa. 110, and said David wrote it by the Holy Ghost (Mark 12:26). He said to His hearers who refused Him, "Did ye never *read* in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?" (Psa. 118:22). And when under, as it were, the shadow of the cross, He said,

Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the *Scriptures* be *fulfilled* that thus it must be? (Matt. 26:53, 54).

What Scriptures? No doubt largely Moses and the prophets, but also the Psalms, which not only spoke of His death and sufferings as crucified, but also of His resurrection, glorification, and sitting at God's right hand, and coming reign.

It would be interesting in looking into the prophets, to trace the variety of instruments God was pleased to use in this blessed service, but that would far exceed our proposed limits. It is well, however, to observe how careful each was to impress those they addressed with the fact, that they came forth on their service with divine authority. They also knew little of each other; and their ministry, from Moses to Christ, occupied about 1500 years. A brief quotation or two from each may suffice for our present purpose.

Isaiah begins by asserting that what he saw was concerning Judah and Jerusalem. He says, "Hear . . . for Jehovah hath spoken." "The *word* which Isaiah the son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem" (Isa. 1:1, 2; 2:1). Jeremiah has, "The word of Jehovah came unto me," or, "The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah." In Ezekiel it says, "The word of Jehovah came expressly unto Ezekiel," or, "He said unto me"; or, "Again the word of Jehovah came unto me," and such like expressions occur many times. He also was commanded to *write*. Jehovah said unto him, "Thou shalt speak *my words* unto them"; and in a vision he saw "a roll . . . written within and without." So assured was he that what he declared was the word of God, that he said, "The word that I *speak* shall come to pass, and the word that I *have spoken* shall be done . . . Thus saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 1:3; 2:7-10; 7:1; 12:25, 28; 16:1).

No one can have carefully considered The Book of Psalms without seeing the value and authority of the written word frequently set forth. It opens by marking one point in the righteous man, being that he meditates in the law of Jehovah day and night; and in Psa. 119, almost every verse speaks of the word, statutes, commandments, or law of Jehovah. Not only does this book extol the purity of the word itself, like silver purified seven times, but also of its cleansing virtue. The authenticity, too, of the Scriptures is so regarded that the

writer says, "*The law of thy mouth* is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver"; and "I love *thy commandments* above gold, yea above fine gold" (Psa. 1:2; 119:9, 72, 127). David was one of those holy men of old of whom Peter speaks, who was "moved by the Holy Spirit" to give unto us the "sure word of prophecy" (2 Pet. 1:19-21).

In Proverbs also we are told that "every word of God is pure . . . add thou not unto *his words*" (Prov. 30:5, 6). And again, "Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge; that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth, that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?" (Prov. 22:20, 21).

Daniel, though he prophesied by the same Spirit, is somewhat different, for his line was "the times of the Gentiles," as also his own people. He gives us, in the second chapter, the whole history of the Gentile nations, and their concluding judgment; he also spoke of the abomination yet to be set up in the temple, which our Lord referred to in Matt. 24:15, and is so soon to have its very solemn fulfilment. In Hosea it is, "The word of Jehovah that came to Hosea" (Hos. 1:1). In Joel, "The word of Jehovah that came to Joel" (Joel. 1:1). Amos said, "Thus saith Jehovah" (Amos. 1:3). Obadiah begins, "Thus saith Jehovah concerning Edom" (v. 1). In Jonah we are twice told that "The word of Jehovah came to Jonah" (Jonah. 1:1; 3:1). Micah begins with, "The word of Jehovah that came to Micah." Nahum says, "Thus saith Jehovah" (Nahum. 1:12). Habakkuk tells us, "Jehovah answered me, and said, *Write* the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that *readeth* it" (Hab. 2:2). Zephaniah begins with, "The word of Jehovah which came unto Zephaniah" (Zeph. 1:1).

The testimony of the prophets was nearly completed when the Jews were carried away into Babylon. We have only three post-captivity prophets -- Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, though some of the prophecies of Jeremiah (see chap. 52:30) and Daniel were given after the great captivity. Haggai distinctly affirms that his word was "the word of Jehovah," and that it came to him at different times. He announced his messages authoritatively, with, "Thus saith Jehovah" (Hag. 1:1, 7; 2:1, 7, 20). Zechariah also asserts the divine source of his most solemn and beautiful utterances, when he says, "The word of Jehovah came unto Zechariah." This he repeatedly asserted (Zech. 1:1, 7; 7:1; 8:1). Malachi also introduces his mournful testimony with, "The burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel by Malachi." It is well not to overlook how this prophet, like others, looks on to the Lord coming in glory to the faithful in Israel, His "jewels," as the Sun of Righteousness with healing to them and judgment on the wicked. This prophet also presses, in Jehovah's name, the divine authority of the writings of Moses, saying, "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments" (Mal. 1:1; 4:2, 4).

It is scarcely possible that we could have more conclusive internal evidence of the writers of the Old Testament Scriptures having been inspired by God for their service. Well then has the Lord informed us by His Holy Spirit that,

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were *written for*

our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

6. Examples of the Divine Authority of the Old Testament Scriptures

With regard to the divine authority of the ancient Scriptures, nothing is more plainly marked than God's displeasure at dishonor to His word, and the blessing that has accompanied obedience. The notice of a few instances will suffice to confirm this.

It was by one man's disobedience that sin entered into the world, with all its consequences of sorrow, death, and judgment. Later on, when God's judgment of fire and brimstone was about to overtake the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Lot with his wife and daughters were rescued from it, they were commanded to "look not behind"; but one of the party thought it wiser to follow her own reasoning than the word of the messenger of God from heaven, and disobeyed. We are told that then God's hand overtook her in judgment; for Lot's wife "looked back . . . and she became a pillar of salt" -- a standing monument of God's displeasure (Gen. 19:17, 26). How awful it is to go contrary to God's word!

The children of Israel who came out of Egypt to the number of six hundred thousand men, never entered the land, except Caleb and Joshua, because they did not believe God; and long after they had had the benefit of God's ordinances and prophets for a series of years, they rebelled against Him, refused His word, despised His prophets, and became worse than the heathen; so that both Israel and Judah were given into captivity. How true it is that God cannot look on disobedience to His word with any allowance!

Again, at the famine of Samaria, Jehovah's servant, Elisha, prophesied. His testimony was, "Thus saith Jehovah, To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria." But a man of high standing there unbelievably replied, "If Jehovah would make windows in heaven might this thing be?" This was despising Jehovah's word. So the prophet said unto him, "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." And so the words of Jehovah were fulfilled; for the next day there was plenty in the famished city, and this great, but unbelieving man, who despised God's word, saw the plentiful supply of food, but instead of tasting it, "the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died." Another appalling instance of the terribleness of refusing, through unbelief, God's word!

Take another case, not that of an unbeliever, but of the failure of a man of faith -- David, a man after God's own heart. He attempted to bring up the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem; but in so doing, God struck Uzzah dead

on his touching the ark when the oxen stumbled, and David was deeply distressed. And why was this marked displeasure

of the Lord? He afterward found out it was because he had acted according to his own reasonings, and that of others, instead of referring to the written word and acting on it in faith. Oxen, cart, and all were the mere inventions of David and his captains; so that when he knew this he was not surprised at the "breach." From the book of Numbers he learnt that, None ought to carry the ark but the Levites. He now takes the written word as his guide, acts on it, and we know with what blessed result. O that all God's people would search the Scriptures to know His mind, and seek grace and strength from Him to carry it out!

Before closing this part of our subject, let us briefly glance at king Jehoiakim in Jer. 36. The prophet had written in a roll what Jehovah had told him about the king and people, and it was read to the king, when he took a knife, cut the roll into pieces, and burnt it in the fire. What followed? We are told that the prophet wrote "another roll," and added to it; and, as a mark of God's displeasure, said, "Thus saith Jehovah of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost" (vv. 21-32). How true are the words of Jehovah, "They that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

Let us now briefly turn to a few examples of such as honored God in receiving His written word, and acting on it, in days too, much like the present, when the traditions and opinions of men have set aside, or corrupted almost everything that God has made known for present guidance and blessing.

Passing by some who had evidently prospered in keeping God's statutes and commandments, "as it is written in the law of Moses," we find it recorded that king Jehoshaphat sought to the Lord God of his fathers, and walked in His commandments. He sent also teachers who taught in Judah, and had the *book of the law of Jehovah* with them. Present blessing was with him so connected with obedience to the written word, that in the battle field he said, "Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, believe in Jehovah your God, so shall ye be established; believe *his prophets*, so shall ye prosper." We know how remarkably God's blessing was with him (2 Chron. 17:4, 9; 20:20, 30).

After this, in a time of abounding evil, we find that Jehoiada, after breaking down the house of Baal with its altars and images, appointed the offices of the house of Jehovah, etc., as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and singing, as it was ordained by David (2 Chron. 23:17, 18).

In Hezekiah's reign, there was remarkable blessing on their turning to the authority of the sacred writings. They soon discovered that they had not kept the solemn and important feast of the passover, "for a long time in such sort *as it is written*." We are told, therefore, that the men of Judah had given them by God one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes by *the word of Jehovah*. Moreover, Hezekiah appointed morning and evening burnt-offerings, and the burnt-offerings for the sabbaths and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, *as it is written* in the law of Moses. They kept the passover and the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness, and then "kept other seven days with

gladness,” and offered sacrifices; “so there was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel [nearly 300 years], there was not the like in Jerusalem” (2 Chron. 30:2, 5, 15-26).

The wonderful revival in the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, may also be traced to the practical acknowledgment of the divine authority of the holy Scriptures. It was brought about by Hilkiyah, the priest, finding in the house of Jehovah

a book of the law of Jehovah given by Moses. And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah . . . And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass when the king heard the words of the law that he rent his clothes.

The reason was that he learnt from these writings that they were justly exposed to divine wrath, and the curses written in the book, because of their sins in having forsaken Jehovah their God, and having burnt incense to other gods. They, therefore, bowed at once to the authority of the sacred writings, and kept the passover according to the ordinance, “as *it is written* in the book of Moses,” and it was accompanied with God’s abundant blessing. They were so exercised by the authority of Scripture about it, that we read that the king’s commandment was, “kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that they may do according to the word of Jehovah by the hand of Moses.” We are further told that the evil, and

abominations that were spied in the land of Judah, and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiyah the priest found in the house of Jehovah. And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to Jehovah with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses, neither after him arose there any like him.

We are told also, “there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet” (2 Chron. 34:14-19, 24; 35:6, 12, 18; 2 Kings 23:24, 25).

The return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon was also strikingly marked by their submission to the authority of the *written law of Jehovah*. So truly did Ezra recognize the divine authenticity of the Scriptures, that we are told that “Ezra had prepared his heart to seek *the law of Jehovah*, and *to do it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.” We read also, that when they were gathered together as one man in Jerusalem, they “builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses, the man of God . . . they kept also the feast of tabernacles *as it is written*.” Again, when the temple was finished, they dedicated the house of God with joy, they offered a sin-offering according to the twelve tribes of Israel, “and they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God which is at Jerusalem, as *it is written* in the book of Moses.” They also found it written in the law, that the feast of tabernacles should be kept. “And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths; for since the days of Jeshua, the son of Nun, unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness” (Ezra 3:2; 6:15-18; 7:6, 10; Neh. 8).

Do not all these examples warn us most solemnly against disobedience to the written word, as well as encourage us to bow to its divine authority? Surely,

to obey is better than sacrifice,

and to honor God is always the path of blessing. It is well also to notice, that in Israel’s history, reviving and restoration began in individual exercise before God, and personal cleaving to His *word* as demanding willing subjection; and, from individual turning to God in this way collective blessing followed. No doubt it is the same now. Wherever souls turn to God in earnest prayer and supplication, and therefore bow to His word with the hearty desire to carry it out, there will always be found the marked blessing of God. Nothing less is the path of faith. Every other way is the fruit of unbelief, and cannot please God. Wherever true faith in God is in exercise, there will be constant appeal to what is written for our instruction, and its authority will be always final and conclusive. Surely to such the Scriptures are “the oracles of God.”

I love the sacred book of God, No other can its place supply;

It points me to the saints’ abode, It gives me wings, and bids me fly.

Sweet book! in thee my eyes discern The image of my absent Lord;

From thine illumined page I learn The joys His presence will afford.

In thee I read my title clear To mansions never to decay:

My Lord! O when wilt Thou appear, And take Thy prisoner far away?”

Before closing our remarks on “the Old Testament,” it may be well to look at

7. Some Samples of its Alleged Inaccuracies

“We say alleged inaccuracies, because to upright souls who wait on God to be taught by His Spirit, what many of the learned of this world think to be contradictory or incorrect, they find to be full of blessing when rightly understood. No doubt errors in copying with the pen accidentally crept in; verbal errors, too, in translation from one language into another; but the preservation of the Scriptures as they are is of itself a standing miracle, and distinctly marks the guardian care of God. But supposing in our present version there are some few verbal inaccuracies, they by no means touch the great lines of truth as to creation, redemption, and glory in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, which are so prominently and fully set forth. Let us look at some of the supposed discrepancies.

Living Souls

One of the commonest statements made by the opposers of the truth is, that as all other living and moving creatures are said to have living souls as well as man, there is therefore no more proof of a man having an immortal existence than brutes. Now the answer is plain and unquestionable. Brutes have living souls as a part of their creation, concerning which God said, "Let the waters bring forth," or, "Let the earth bring forth"; whereas God formed man of the dust of the ground, and

breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Gen. 1:20, 24, 30; margin; 2:7).

Thus man was not only unlike every other creature in that he was created in the image of God, but he "became a living soul" by God's in-breathing. Hence his immortality hence his existence after death. If he dies in his sins, after death is judgment. His body only is spoken of as mortal.

We must not, however, confound immortality with eternal life. Eternal life is by our being associated with Christ the Savior by faith; and thus receiving the gift of eternal life.

God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:11, 12).

First and Second Chapters of Genesis

A very old attack of rationalists as to these chapters giving two accounts of the creation, and contradicting each other, has lately been revived, and largely published. The perfection of the two chapters are wholly unperceived by them; so true is it, that "the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11). The truth is, that in the first section of the book of Genesis, which extends to the end of the third verse of the second chapter, we have God's work and His rest. *God* only (Elohim) is spoken of all through. It is not God giving us an account of everything He created, for angels and other heavenly beings are not there included; but it is God giving us so much as He judged best for our profit and blessing. After the general statement in the first verse, the second verse shows us the chaotic state the earth was in when God began to form the present heaven and earth. for man. Between the first and second verses, a considerable time may have elapsed, and vast changes have taken place, so as to account for geological discoveries; for the earth, not the heaven, was without form, and void. The earth, no doubt, when created, must have been perfect. "As for God, his way is perfect."

In the first chapter it is God making everything for man's comfort and blessing day after day, on the sixth day forming man, and on the seventh day resting because all was finished. God is mentioned in this section about thirty times; but in the second chapter we have not simply God (Elohim), but all through it is the Lord God (Jehovah Elohim). Why is this? Because it treats of man's relationship with God. Now relationship is formed, God reveals Him self as Jehovah God. Unlike the first chapter, it is not here God giving a consecutive account of what He made in six days, and then rested; but this chapter enters into details more in moral order than in a

consecutive style, and very especially occupies us with Jehovah Elohim's thoughts and ways with "the first man." He is long afterward spoken of in Scripture as "the first man," and this chapter is authenticated by being quoted from in that he "was made a living soul" (1 Cor. 15:45). Gen. 2 informs us, that "Jehovah God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." He was to till the ground. He might eat of every tree except "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," and if he did eat of it, death would be the result. As he was created to have dominion over every living creature on earth, Jehovah Elohim brought them to him to name them; and whatever he called them, that was the name thereof. The account also recorded of the formation of Eve, gives us one of the most striking types of Christ and the church found within the whole compass of Scripture. There is also the intimation, that redemption was not brought in merely to repair what man had spoiled; but that, before sin entered, God's eternal counsel and purpose as to Christ and the church were before His mind, and, as we are afterwards told, we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. The earth, however, would be the platform on which man must be tested; man innocent, and man guilty; man without law and man under law; man in Christ's presence on earth, and now during the presence and power of the Holy Spirit come down; and man will be tested also under Christ's reign in righteousness, and as judge of all. And in the eternal state while the earthly people occupy the sin-cleansed earth in unchanging blessedness, the church -- the bride and body of Christ -- shall share the inheritance with the Heir of all things, and shine in heavenly glory throughout all ages (Eph. 3:21). Thus in the type Adam could say, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" -- "one flesh," and all the result of the man's "deep sleep," so that she shares with him his dominion and glory. Few chapters have been more thoroughly authenticated by our Lord and His apostles than Gen. 2. On one occasion, when an inspired writer referred to Adam and Eve, he says, "Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13). This chapter unfolds this to us, and gives most important information as to man's accountability, privileges, and blessings, as well as enters into detail as to what took place on the sixth day. It also gives us the divine institution of marriage, and that man and wife should now typically set forth Christ and the church (Eph. 5). Had we not all this instruction, in what darkness and uncertainty as to these things should we be; and if men were hearkening to God, and seeking to learn of Him in reading and pondering His holy word, instead of expressing themselves with such temerity and mistaken zeal, the alleged inaccuracies would never have been heard of.

It does not say in the first chapter that Adam and Eve were made at the same time; nor does it say in the second chapter that man was formed before the animals. Each chapter is perfect after its kind. In the first, we have the consecutive account of God having made all in six days, and then rested. In the second chapter we have the moral order of Jehovah Elohim's relationship with man; hence the statement that, man having been formed of the dust of the earth, God breathed into him "the breath of life, and man became a living soul"; his

responsibility as to the trees, his dominion, and the blessing of an help-meet, have a more fitting place here than in the first chapter.

The oft-repeated and irreverent statement, that in writing the first two chapters of Genesis, Moses copied from two different “theories of creation” which contradict each other, is a mere fable, and carries with it its own refutation. A moment’s reflection is enough to convince any fair mind, that no one could give a true account of creation unless God had revealed it. Besides, as we have seen, the second chapter, in divine perfection, follows the first in giving us further information as to Adam and Eve, which could not properly be introduced into the first, which chiefly sets forth God’s creatorial ways. We do well to remember that Moses was commanded to write, that he often gave his authority with, “Jehovah said unto Moses,” that he abode in the mount with God forty days and forty nights at a time, and is spoken of as “faithful in all his house as a servant.” Moreover we ask, Where in Scripture is there a shred of authority for such charges against the book of Genesis?

No human being, however much spiritually instructed, pretends to understand all Scripture, or to be able to clear up all the difficulties that may be presented. On the contrary, even the most gifted apostle, when contemplating God in His dispensational actings, says, in a worshiping spirit,

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33).

For any of us to suppose, that we can comprehend all the mysteries of divine truth, would only be the clearest proof of our ignorance.

If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know (1 Cor. 8:2).

If apostles were wont to say, “We know in part,” how small must be the measure of any of us now! It is not by argument we advance spiritually; but humble souls God will bless. We have never yet known a child of God, who has quietly waited on God for the teaching of the Spirit as to difficulties in Scripture, but could say that some things which seemed to be inexplicable, have not only been cleared up, but have brought blessing to his soul. Jeremiah felt the need of this in his day. He said, “Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud; for Jehovah hath spoken”; for it was as true then as it is now, that, “the proud he knoweth afar off.” Logic is not faith. Happy are they who bow before God, and say, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” Happy are those who are obedient to His word.

The Deluge

Nor has the inspired account of the Deluge escaped the rude hand of mistaken men. Very lately there has emanated from the press, by a professed protestant teacher, charges of “historical inaccuracies in the Bible,” and “contradictory statements,” which, he says, “cannot be true.” “As an example,” says he, cp. Gen. 6:20 with Gen. 7:3. ‘Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind . . . two of every

sort shall come unto thee to keep them alive.’ ‘Of fowls also of the air by *sevens*, the male and the female, to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth.’” The charge of inaccuracy and contradiction is, that the direction in one chapter is that Noah is to take *two* of every kind, and in another chapter *seven*. Let us see how far it be an inaccuracy, or whether it be not a ministry of Christ, and an example of the divine perfection of the word.

If the reader turns to a paragraph Bible, he will find these statements in two separate paragraphs, the first extending from Gen. 6:13 to the end of the chapter, and in it *God* is commanding, and *God* is obeyed by Noah. Observe, it is *God* here. The other expression referred to begins with ch. 7, and ends with the fifth verse, and here it is *Jehovah* commanding, and it concludes with, “thus Noah did, according to all that *Jehovah* commanded him.” The first allusion to “two of every sort shall come unto thee [Noah] to keep them alive,” is God’s (Elohim’s) care of His creatures to preserve every kind alive in the earth. But when we read of His taking “of every *clean* beast by *sevens*, his male and his female,” it is God as *Jehovah* who speaks. And why? Because He is now arranging as in relationship with man for sacrifices -- types of Christ. The paragraph, therefore, begins with, “Jehovah said unto Noah, Come, thou and all thy house, into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation” (ch. 7:1). How striking this is! It is God as *Jehovah* owning relationship on the ground of redemption with Noah, the man of faith, as we know he was (See Heb. 11:7). We are therefore told, in the next place, that he was to take *clean* beasts, by *sevens*, and also the fowl of the heaven by *sevens*, and it is then added, “to keep seed alive upon the face of all the earth,” for the judgment of the deluge was at hand. Now, the reason of this addition to the general command of *two* of every sort is very manifest to souls who have to do with Christ, as taught and led by His Holy Spirit. It was *Jehovah*’s mind that the accomplished work of Jesus, on which all our blessings are founded, should be frequently before Him in figure by the offering up of sacrifices. For this “*clean* beasts,” and “fowls of the heaven “were indispensable, for surely nothing unclean could typify the Holy Savior. Had there been *only* “two of every sort,” the offering of some in sacrifice would have put an end to those particular kinds of created beings. So the “*sevens*” left ample room both for sacrifices, and “to keep seed alive on the face of all the earth.” Thus *Jehovah*, who counted His people “righteous” on the principle of faith in a *coming* Redeemer, shadowed forth Christ in the “clean beasts “and “fowls “for sacrifices, as Adam and Noah in their measure also were figures of Him, as “the last Adam,” in having dominion over the created things around them. We find that, no sooner did Noah emerge from the ark, and set foot on the purged earth, than he “builded an altar unto *Jehovah*, and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar,” which most blessedly typified Christ’s sacrifice of Himself. “And *Jehovah* smelled a sweet savor; and *Jehovah* said in His heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake,” etc. Now, where is the “inaccuracy”? Is it not clear that the “*sevens*” were actually needed for the sacrifice of “burnt-offerings”; and, if not provided for, would have at once exterminated

some, at least, of the “two of every sort”? Where is the “contradiction”? If *two* applied to all unclean animals, and *seven* to clean ones, because of the requirements of sacrifices, where is the difficulty? The child of God, to whom the Scriptures are “profitable,” and for whose “comfort” they are written, finds a real delight in the contemplation of such passages of holy Scripture, as opened up to him by the Holy Spirit; while the philosopher, and all other of the wise and prudent of this world, see nothing to interest, and try to see much to find fault with. Now we trust it is clear to our readers, why it is said of Noah, that “*Jehovah* shut him in,” while in the same verse it is said, they “went in male and female of all flesh, as *God* commanded him” (Gen. 7:16). The Scriptures abound with such marks of their divinity. How true are our Savior’s words to the Father,

Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight (Matt. 11:25, 26).

Jacob’s Going Into Egypt

It has been stated, that because we read in Scripture of those who went down into Egypt being sixty-six in one place, in another seventy, and in a third seventy-five, there must necessarily be contradiction in the statements; but those who make such statements have not read the passages with sufficient care to perceive that they are three different calculations.

1. If we turn to Gen. 46, we find a complete list of those who composed the sixty-six, and accompanied Jacob *into* Egypt. Such accuracy is manifested in the account, that two who had died were named only to show they were not in the list. “All the souls that came *with Jacob into Egypt*, which came out of his loins, all the souls were threescore and six.” This is the first list.

2. The next verse tells us that “all the souls of *the house of Jacob* which came into Egypt were threescore and ten.” This is the second list. How is it so calculated? Because Joseph and his two sons which were born him in Egypt were there already. Hence these with Jacob, as stated, made up the number of seventy souls. Now where is the contradiction? Nay more. Is it possible to read this chapter attentively, without being struck with the care that is taken to avoid the appearance of any discrepancy? But further. If we look into the beginning of Ex 1, we again find the list spoken of as seventy, and including not only Jacob’s eleven sons by name, who came out of his loins, and went with him *into* Egypt, but, in strict agreement with Gen. 46:27, it is added, “for Joseph was in Egypt already.” Now where is there any contradiction?

3. When Stephen, in his famous speech, refers to this, he says, “Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob *to* him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls” (Acts 7:14). This is the third list, and here, even to upright souls, a difficulty may present itself. Observe, however, in this calculation, that Joseph and his sons may not be included, and if so, it leaves room for nine more of the Patriarch’s “kindred”; and kindred is certainly not the same thought as

those who “came out of his loins.” We do not offer any positive solution of the difficulty, nor is it needful to prove how exactly the list of seventy-five was made up. If we had been told that two of his sons’ wives had died, it would be made clear, but we are not told, and must be silent. It is enough to know that Stephen, in this statement, quoted from the Septuagint, the authority of which was generally allowed. The fact, too, that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit, and speaking before an assembly of masters in Israel, who were well instructed as to every detail of the history of Jacob, these and other considerations leave no opening for question as to the veracity of the martyr’s statement.

The Quails

In Num. 11, the account of the quails has certainly puzzled many; but like some other apparently insurmountable difficulties, they vanish before those who cast themselves on God, and wait on Him to instruct them. As it stands, infidels have made a great deal of it, from the statement in our version that the quails were “two cubits high,” or, about three feet high, “*upon* the face of the earth,” whereas it should be *above* the face of the earth; that is, they would be made to fly about three feet high, so that a man would be able to take as many as he chose. We have looked into the best translations of the Hebrew that we know, and also in the Revised Version, and in all it is rendered, “*above* the face of the earth”; and not as infidels have said, packed from the ground for three feet high, over a distance of forty miles across.

River, Not Flood

There is a somewhat similar error of translation in Josh. 24, when Abraham is said to have been taken from the other side of the flood, as if this account made him to be living in Noah’s day, instead of long after, as Gen. 11 tells us. But the mistake is obvious to any fair mind, for “flood” is a word that is translated in many other Scriptures, “river,” and means that Abraham was taken by Jehovah from the other side of the river Euphrates. This, too, is corrected in the Revised Version, and in three other of the best translations.

Sun, Stand Thou Still!

As to the sun standing still (Josh. 10), a lady said to us lately, “Of course, that cannot be true, because it is entirely contrary to the laws of nature.” To which we replied, “Let us read it:

Then spake Joshua to Jehovah, in the day when Jehovah delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said, in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies . . . and there was no day like that before it, or after it, that Jehovah hearkened unto the voice of a man; for Jehovah fought for Israel (Josh. 10:12-14).

“That would be an impossibility,” repeated the lady, “because

it would be entirely opposed to the laws of nature.” How sad to find people speaking of God as if He must be subject to any of these laws, for “with Him,” we are told, “nothing shall be impossible.” Again, we asked, “Was not the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ entirely contrary to that law of nature termed attraction of gravitation? And will not the resurrection and rapture of the saints, when the Lord comes, be also entirely contrary to all the laws of natural philosophy?” The fact is if, in our calculations, we leave out God who is omnipotent as well as omniscient and omnipresent, there is no knowing to what length of scepticism and infidelity we may go. Well did our Lord say of some, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.”

When we remember that, for many hundreds of years after the days of our Lord, the sacred Scriptures were only made known by written copies, and how difficult it is to copy anything with perfect accuracy, and then, as before noticed, add to this the possibility of errors in translation, and also the mistaken zeal of the most upright adding or erasing what they could not but think desirable from their meager or incorrect view of a passage, it is marvelous that we have the Bible so kept and preserved from the tampering of infidelity as it has been. Difficulties we all experience as to portions of the Scriptures here and there, but to upright souls God still fulfils His own word, “I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye” (Psa. 32:8).

The Threshing Floor

Take another case. Rationalists tell us there is a serious contradiction between the account given in 2 Sam. 24:24, and 1 Chron. 21:25, as to David’s purchase of the threshing floor from Araunah. This allegation is now again being widely circulated. It says in Samuel that David bought it for fifty shekels of silver, and in 1 Chronicles the price is six hundred shekels of gold by weight; so our opponents tell us both cannot be true. The fact is, however, that both are perfectly correct. In 2 Samuel we learn that he *bought the threshing floor and the oxen* for fifty shekels of silver, and in 1 Chron. 21:22, 25, we are told that he bought “the place” for six hundred shekels of gold by weight. It is obvious that “the place” might have extended over a large area beyond “the threshing floor.”

The Census of Israel and of Judah

In the same chapters, another question has been raised; because in 2 Sam. 24:9, when the census was taken, we are told there were in *Israel eight hundred thousand valiant men that drew the sword*; and *the men of Judah were five hundred thousand men*; whereas, in 1 Chron. 21:5, “All they of Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men *that drew sword*, and Judah was four hundred, three score and ten thousand men that drew sword.” It is alleged that there is a contradiction as to the numbers given; but let us consider, that in Samuel it is the *valiant men* that are enumerated, and in 1 Chron. *all that drew sword*, making it possible there were

then among them those who, though they drew sword, would not be ranked among David’s valiant men; and of Judah we find in Samuel there were five hundred thousand men, and in 1 Chronicles only four hundred and seventy thousand of them drew sword, whether from old age or any other reason we are not told.

Now all thought of inaccuracy as to these sacred Scriptures vanishes, and we find, that the more we prayerfully ponder the word, in humble dependence on the Holy Spirit, the more divinely perfect the written word appears; so perfect that we are struck sometimes with the importance of the addition or omission of a single letter. For instance, when reference is made to Christ as the seed of Abraham, the Holy Spirit by Paul says, “He saith not, And to *seeds*, as of many; but as of one, And to thy *seed*, which is Christ” (Gal. 3:16). Again, we read of Christ being “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin [not sins but sin] of the world.” It is obvious that if Christ had taken away the sins of the world, the world would have been saved; but the new heaven and the new earth will then show that He has taken “sin” completely out of the world, and that there righteousness dwells. Again, we find the written word saying sometimes “that the *Scripture* might be fulfilled,” but when our Lord in Gethsemane spoke of His competency to have from His Father, if desired, twelve legions of angels, He added, “But how then shall the *Scriptures* be fulfilled?” and again, “that the *Scriptures* of the prophets might be fulfilled.” And why Scriptures and not Scripture? Because all the prophetic writings as to His humiliation, rejection, sufferings, pain, forsaking, must all have their accomplishment in His death as a sacrifice and offering to God on the cross.

Before leaving our consideration of the Old Testament, it is interesting to notice that, early in the book, we find man’s utter ruin and total unfitness for God’s holy presence; then we have largely and repeatedly set forth in types that it is only by the shedding of blood there can be remission of sins or approach to God; and toward the end it is plainly written that the “just shall live by faith.” Thus, sinner as man is, in virtue of the blood of Jesus, he is cleansed and justified before God on the principle of faith. Peter put it simply when he said, “To him give *all the prophets* witness that, through his name, whosoever believeth in *him* shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). Such is God’s unutterable goodness and grace, long ago declared by the Holy Spirit through His ancient prophets; and such grace abounds still to every one who takes his true place before God as utterly unclean, lost, and unmendably bad, and who has to do with the precious blood of Christ, as his only ground of peace and title to glory. How truly the believer can say of the holy Scriptures:

Here the Redeemer’s welcome voice
Spreads heavenly peace around;
And life and everlasting joys
Attend the blissful sound.

O may these heavenly pages be
My ever dear delight;
And still new beauties may I see,
And still increasing light.

8. *The Silent Interval of Four Hundred Years*

The silence of the prophetic testimony between the close of the Old Testament and the commencement of the New, which continued over four hundred years, is very significant. Before that, all through the course of God's ancient people, notwithstanding their many sins and departures from Jehovah, sacred history faithfully gave its inspired record of them, until Malachi closed it with the saddest denunciations of their ways. And what makes this long and silent gap so remarkable, is, that the final testimony of the prophet links itself with the beginning of Luke's gospel in foretelling the coming of John the forerunner of our Lord. He said, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me" (Mal. 3:1; Luke 1:13-17; Mark 1:2, 3). Our Lord also associated the prophets with the Baptist -- "The law and the prophets were until John." These links certainly unite the Old and New Testaments in a very remarkable way. May we learn the lessons they are intended to teach us!

Very solemn indeed is Jehovah's silence for four centuries in the history of His favored people; especially when we consider the abounding evil which they so long pursued, as recorded by their inspired writers, notwithstanding the goodness and patience God had exercised toward them. Their sad state weighed heavily on the spirit of the prophet Malachi. He began his message to them by saying, "The burden of the word of Jehovah to Israel by Malachi," and ended it by alluding to "the great and dreadful day of Jehovah." True, he added, that Elijah would be sent before that, to "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (ch.1:1; 4:5, 6). In this solemn way the Old Testament writings were closed; and we have no divinely-given annals of the Hebrew people during the following four hundred years. May we ponder its grave significance! Was it because of their many sins, that divine communications and miraculous intervention ceased? Was it on this account that prophetic inspiration was discontinued, and they were left to their own devices? Of one thing we may be well assured, that, under the circumstances, inspiration was suspended in God's wisdom and faithfulness.

On looking into Luke's gospel, which is so blessedly linked, as we have seen, with the last of Israel's prophets, we find toward the close of this gap, some turning to Jehovah and His word. Zacharias and Elizabeth were spoken of as "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." Others, too, were, through grace, acted on by the Holy Spirit, and therefore turned to the word of Jehovah; and were so bowed by it, that they "looked for redemption in Jerusalem," and served Him day and night with fastings and prayers.

In the Jewish people, and Zacharias, who was a true descendant of Aaron, and whose lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord, we find a further recognition of Jehovah in turning to Him according to His

word. We are told, that "the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense" (Luke 1:9, 10). And there appeared unto Zacharias an angel of the Lord with cheering and encouraging words as to John, as afterwards he came to Mary concerning the Messiah. These facts are very significant, and accordingly the forerunner was, ere long, to be born into the world -- the *prophet* of the Highest, and to be soon followed by the birth of Messiah, the Son of the Highest. Jesus was the true Shepherd of the sheep, and to Him the porter opened; for holy men and women, taught by the Holy Spirit, and taken up with Jehovah and His interests, were, by their rejoicing and cordial welcome, like the porter opening the door. If angels heralded His coming into the world with, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men," Simeon could take the babe into his arms, and with a grateful and worshipping heart say, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Anna also found her way into the temple at that moment, and "gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."

Divine communications which had been suspended for such a lengthened period as four hundred years, could now be resumed according to the wisdom, and power, and goodness of God; but, as we afterward find in the New Testament Scriptures, not according to the kind of ministry of olden prophets, though by the same Spirit, but according to the grace, and gifts, and qualifications they received of the Lord, who fitted and furnished them for the service to which they were called as His friends and servants.

9. *The New Testament*

{Introduction}

In approaching our consideration of the New Testament, it is well to premise that there are two common errors in the present day, and found almost everywhere in Christendom:

1, That the use of the Bible is only to teach persons the way of salvation; and 2, That the Book of Revelation is too difficult for any one to understand. As to the first point, it is plainly said that the Scriptures are not only able to make "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," but that every Scripture is God-breathed, or

given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

Thus we see that the Scriptures are the complete and all-sufficient guide of man after he has been born of God and saved from coming wrath. There is another point of all importance here. When the inspired apostle says that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived," he turns to Scripture as the only resource in an evil day; and would have Timothy know of whom he had learned the things he had been assured of. If many were asked in the present day from whom they had learned this doctrine and that,

they would find it difficult to reply; some would say, "Our church teaches it." Now, true Spirit-taught and Spirit-led souls would say they learnt it from the Scriptures, and therefore they can assert its divine authority. This is the exercise of faith, and nothing short of it can be pleasing to God. And as to the expression, "Our church teaches," it is not only unauthorized by the Scriptures, but exactly opposite to Scripture, for there we learn that, instead of the church teaching, the church is taught, and built up by various gifts from an ascended Savior (Eph. 4:11, 12). If any take refuge in another snare, that such and such doctrines must be true because the clergy have accepted them, we do well to remember that "the faith was once delivered to the saints," and is therefore the common possession of all true believers. The Scriptures, not clever men, or preachers, or traditions, are our resource in these evil days; but we are enjoined to have that abiding in us which we have heard from the beginning; that is, the beginning of Christianity (1 John 2:24).

It has been truly said, that the church has no power to give authority to the written word, because it is the word of God; but, on the contrary, the word speaks to us of the authority of the Lord in the church, for He is Lord of all. The Scriptures call for submission, because they are God's word; by their own moral evidence and intrinsic authority they commend themselves to the conscience. Confidence in them, as the word of God is to us of infinite value.

As to the Book of Revelation being too difficult to be understood, it is only another instance of man's perversion of what is of God; for "Revelation" means revealing, or making known, which is surely something exactly opposite to difficult and inexplicable. Those who approach that book in unfeigned dependence on God's teaching by His Spirit, not only will certainly have the blessing promised in the third verse, but will have an intelligence as to things around, and their hearts drawn into the path of devotedness in a way that they could not otherwise have known.

With regard to "every Scripture being God-breathed," if they were merely the expression of the judgment of even good men, we should then have only human instead of divine authority, and have no basis for faith, no authority of God on which to rest. Those, therefore, who deny inspiration are always restless, and have nothing but uncertainty as to the eternal future.

We shall be told by some that the human element is easily perceived in the sacred writings; to which we reply, Of this there is no doubt. No one can be familiar with the writings of Paul, or John, or Peter, or James, without being struck with the style with which each sets forth his particular line of truth. The same thing is seen in the Old Testament. How different was the manner in which Moses, Isaiah, David, Jeremiah and others, communicated the instruction for which the Spirit of God employed them. No doubt God not only selected His workmen, but each at the very time, and in the state and circumstances He was pleased to appoint, as best suited to carry out His mind and will. He called into the service of inspiration a king or a fisherman, a man of wealth or of poverty, a learned man brought up at Gamaliel's feet, or an

unlearned, a mighty man or a feeble woman, just as it pleased Him. He used their tongues, tears, affections, memories, or pens. He instructed them by direct intercourse with Himself, by visions, dreams, what others had written, or by the Spirit's teaching and revelation. He used them in a palace or a dungeon; in a shipwreck or before magistrates; in poverty, or in abundance; in distress, or in joy, or other circumstances; as well as concerning what they saw, and heard, and felt. He who had used all kinds of instruments in the history of His people to accomplish His purposes, could use any means He was pleased to select in giving us His own revelation of His will. All are His servants.

The various writers were not only enlightened, but they were inspired. In giving us their writings, they acted not according to their own will, but in so doing, carried out God's will; so that what they communicated is over and over again called "the word of God." For example, in the Old Testament we read, "The Spirit of God came upon Azariah," and, "The word of God came unto Nathan saying," etc.; and in the New Testament we read of one who had "abundance of revelations," and of his communicating to believers what he had received, as "the word of the Lord."

No doubt God could do without men in communicating His mind if He saw fit. An unseen hand has written it on the plaster of the wall. He also opened the mouth of an ass to speak with man's voice. He can use any instrument He pleases. He has also put words by His Spirit into the mouth of a wicked , and allowed the foul Betrayer to work miracles as the other apostles. But He is usually pleased, in His loving kindness and tender mercy, to take up such in His service as walk in His fear. He has also caused the words and ways of Satan and wicked men to be recorded, but the writer was inspired to write so much or so little of them as suited the will of God, in exposing their wickedness, and in ministering for our warning and blessing. Faith rejoices in the perfect love and almighty power of our Savior God.

We have had the most incontestable proofs of the Old Testament Scriptures being inspired, and authenticated by our Lord and His apostles. Our Lord honored, obeyed, and used the very words of the Old Testament; and with the apostles an appeal to their authority was final. As to the inspiration of the New Testament, we are told by an inspired apostle,

which things [the things of God] also we speak, not in the *words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth;

and at the same time he emphatically disallows all ability in the *natural man*, either to *know*, *receive*, or to *communicate* the things of God. So completely does the Spirit of God teach, that He alone is the source of the Scriptures of truth, that though Paul had been caught up into the third heaven, yet we never find him on this account asserting any competency for divine things apart from the Holy Spirit.

Although the New Testament Scriptures are equally inspired as the Old, and are interwoven with many hundreds of quotations from it, yet the instruments employed in giving us the sacred writings were somewhat different. Thus we find that

the Old Testament prophets did not understand their own prophecies, and searched as to what they signified; yet they knew they were ministering to others rather than to themselves, even unto us who now have the ministry of the Holy Ghost come down from heaven. Their prophecies testified also to “the sufferings of Christ and the glories which should follow,” so that the church on earth formed no part of their ministry. We know from other Scriptures that the church was not *revealed* in the Old Testament, although now we can go back to it and find *typical* instruction concerning the church. We are emphatically taught, that the revelation of the church or assembly was “hid in God,” “kept secret since the world began,” and “not made known” till Saul of Tarsus was called by divine grace. We have, therefore, in the Old Testament, after the call of Abraham, Israel and the heathen or Gentile nations; but in the New Testament we have Jews, Gentiles, and the church of God (1 Cor. 10:32. See also 1 Pet. 1:10-14; Rom. 16:25; Eph. 3:3, 5, 9).

There is an important text in 2 Tim. 2:15,

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Now this rightly dividing the word of truth does not simply mean, as many say, giving to the saint and sinner each their portion, but it is cutting in a straight line the word of truth. In consequence of the accomplishment of eternal redemption, and the coming down of the Holy Ghost because of Christ being glorified, believers are brought into a totally different position and state to what could possibly have been known before. From the second chapter of Acts then, when the Holy Spirit came down to indwell believers, and abide with us forever, we have the truth flowing out by the inspired apostles, and made known as could not have been known before (1 Cor. 2:9, 10). We judge, therefore, that we rightly divide, or cut in a straight line the word of truth, when we accept, as in contrast with God’s earthly people, our standing in Christ in the heavenlies, and know our union with Him by the Holy Spirit sent down by Him in ascension as Lord and Christ, and given to be the Head over all things to His assembly which is His body, the fulness of Him which filleth all in all (Eph. 1:19-23).

No doubt what is known as dispensational truth is also included in “rightly dividing [or cutting in a straight line] the word of truth.” Hence we find some Scriptures which apply to God’s earthly people, the Jews; and others which especially belong to His heavenly people, the church -- the body and bride of Christ. We have also instruction concerning millennial saints, and other Old Testament saints, the reign of Christ, etc.

The New Testament was written after the coming of the Holy Spirit, hence the intelligence of these inspired writers compared with the Old Testament prophets. Again, we do not find apostles saying, “Thus saith Jehovah,” because their relationship was not with God as Jehovah, but with the Father and the Son. Hence they wrote, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and the like.

When Paul wrote to the Galatians, he reminded them that he had received the gospel, which he preached from the Lord Himself, and not of man, nor by man; and so divinely-given

did he know his ministry to be, that he could solemnly declare, “though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” How could he possibly use such language unless he had known it to be given him by the Lord? We may remember, perhaps, that when he was converted by a sight of the Lord Jesus in heaven, he was then told,

I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to *make thee a minister and a witness* both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee (Acts 26:16);

so there is the plainest possible evidence that the apostle Paul received his commission for the ministry of the word immediately from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The New Testament, like the Old, is also presented to us in three parts.

1. We have first the gospels, and Acts 1, giving us the coming into the world of the Only-begotten, His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and His bidding His disciples to wait for the gift of the Holy Spirit, and assuring them, by angelic ministry, that He shall so come in like manner as His disciples saw Him go into heaven.
2. From Acts 2 to the coming of our Lord for us, we have another portion of the New Testament chiefly occupied with the church of God on earth -- its calling, endowments, ministry, and hope.
3. The Book of Revelation, and other prophetic writings in the epistles and gospels, which give us the divine estimate of everything here, and God’s judgment of evil, and the translation and reign of saints with Christ, concluding with the new heaven and new earth, in which righteousness will dwell.

With regard to the four gospels, they are almost entirely occupied with our Lord’s own ways, ministry, and works. We are told that the “words” He spake, He received from the Father; so perfect was He as Man in dependence on the Father, that He said, “The Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak.” Again, we read, “He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God,” so that nothing could be more truly of, and from God, than the words which He spake. It is no marvel, then, that He should say, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.”

In reference to the inspiration of the New Testament, we must keep in mind that the Holy Spirit had come and indwelt believers before any part of it was written. Those whom He employed to write it, no longer, as in olden time, wrote what they did not understand, and greatly desired to know; but those who wrote the New Testament, though by the same Spirit, had intelligence of accomplished redemption; they enjoyed communion with the Father and the Son, and new relationships as to what they wrote, for they were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. We, therefore, as we have before observed, never find them saying, “Thus saith Jehovah”; but they speak of the Father and the Son, especially in the epistles, as addressing the children of God.

There are, however, certain true marks of the distinguishing activities of the Holy Spirit. He is the Glorifier and Testifier of the Son of God, and takes of the Father and the Son, and shows unto us. He always leads into the path of obedience to the Father's will, and subjection to Christ as Lord of all. Now, without going farther as to the operations of the Holy Spirit, by whose power, as come down from heaven, the gospel is preached, it is clear, that every part of the New Testament abounds with proofs of His ministrations by the writers. Moreover, the Scriptures speak to us continually of holiness, truth, righteousness, the grace of God, and of His faithfulness to His own word; and all taught of Him learn that "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God"; that He is "given unto us," that "we might know the things that are freely given to us of God," for "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God" (John 14-16; 1 Cor. 2:10, 12). God hath then not given unto us "the spirit of the world," or "the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

Thus while we find it is said that, as to the Old Testament Scriptures, holy men of God were "moved by the Holy Spirit" to give them to us, the New Testament Scriptures were written by the same Spirit through those instruments who knew the Lord Jesus as the Accomplisher of their eternal redemption, and were intelligent by the indwelling Spirit concerning what they wrote.

With regard to the apostle Paul's ministry, he was especially a minister of the church or assembly; to him was revealed "the mystery," as we have seen, and only his writings give us the revelation of the assembly, or "one body" and its administration. He taught also its practical power on the life and walk of saints now, both individually and collectively, by the same Spirit, as well as the ministration of the affections of Christ in nourishing and cherishing every member of His body. Besides this, and the instructions he received of the Lord from heaven at his conversion, he received also an "abundance of revelations." For example, as to the Lord's Supper, when it was instituted by our Lord, the nation of Israel had not been judicially set aside, and the assembly set up, we therefore find it was taken in hope of the kingdom; hence our Lord added,

I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in *my Father's kingdom* (Matt. 26:29).

It is quite true, looking at drinking wine as a type of earthly joy, He has not since had joy in, or with, His earthly people; nor will He till He comes in great power and glory, and brings them into their promised blessing in the land as a repentant people. When, therefore, Israel was actually given up for a time, and this marvelous mystery of the church or assembly began to be built according to God's eternal purpose, as a people on earth united by one indwelling Spirit to Christ in heaven, as the limbs of our natural bodies are united to our head, then the Lord's Supper needed a special revelation. And what was it? Hear what the Apostle says,

I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks,

he brake it, and said, Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also, he took the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, *ye do show the Lord's death till he come* (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

Now this was a most important revelation, and the Apostle declares that he had it from the glorified Lord, and for us; so that we have His own mind about it now, that instead of watching for events, and waiting for the kingdom in earth, we are to be doing it as looking up, not knowing whether the next moment we may hear the shout, and in the twinkling of an eye be taken away from the earth-changed, translated, meet the Lord in the air, and enter with Him on our heavenly and eternal inheritance.

It is also since the glorification of Jesus and His having sent the Holy Spirit, that we read in Scripture of "the Lord's table." Hence it is only after the formation of "one body" by "one Spirit," that we are taught that, in breaking and eating of the "one bread" (one loaf) we express "one body," "for we are all partakers of that one bread "(or loaf). We are also enjoined to be using diligence to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." These truths were specially committed to Paul as a minister of the church, or assembly (See 1 Cor. 10:16, 17, 21; 12:13. Col. 1:24-26).

Again, we find as to His coming another special revelation, not given before; for while Old Testament Scriptures speak of the Lord coming to reign with His saints, His coming *for* us at the rapture was not known till the Apostle wrote to the Thessalonian saints. He said, "This we say unto you *by the word of the Lord*." What was it? That the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, the dead saints be raised, the living changed, and all caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord. It is clear, then, that the Apostle had revealed to him, by the Lord Himself, many things to communicate to us for our instruction and blessing. Peter, in his second epistle, most touchingly refers to Paul's writings being inspired, and therefore Scripture. He says,

Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned, and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15, 16).

So careful was the apostle Paul in his writings to minister what he was commanded of the Lord, that when, on one or two occasions, he gave his own judgment merely, as a servant of the Lord who had the Spirit of God, he would say,

I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful (1 Cor. 7:25, 40).

But in the same letter he says, in another part, "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." So

absolutely was his ministration to them the word of God, that he says, "What! came *the word of God* out from you? or came it unto you only?" (1 Cor. 14:36-38).

The Gospels

In turning to the Gospels, we find them written by four servants of the Lord, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But we must dismiss from our minds at once the thought, that they were written by men who recorded what they had known as facts, each one according as his memory served him. This is how men generally write biographies; but it is quite certain that the writers of the gospels often omitted to mention facts with which they were most conversant, and recorded at length other circumstances of which they had no personal knowledge. Let us turn to a few examples. In the raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead, we are distinctly told that no one was present with the Lord but Peter, James, and John; and yet, most striking as the fact is, and most important too in the history of our Lord's ways, neither of them refer to it; but Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who were not present, all name it, and enter into particulars of it.

Again, at the time when the Lord's compassion was so drawn out toward the widow of Nain, who was attending the funeral of her only son, that He then and there raised him from the dead in the presence of crowds of people, and as we might expect, would be talked of far and near, yet neither of the Apostles refer to it, and Luke only has recorded it. Whether he was present or not we are not told; but such a marvelous miracle, and so full of tenderness to a bereaved widow in raising her son to life and delivering him to his mother, if the writers were merely recording facts from memory, as people naturally would do, it would certainly not have been omitted.

In the transfiguration also, we find that only Peter, James, and John were favored to be present, to behold the pattern of the coming kingdom. But neither of them have recorded in their writings the particulars of it. Peter alludes to it in his second epistle, and says, "We were eye-witnesses of his majesty"; but neither John nor James tell us anything about it, important beyond all expression as the event was.

Then again, look at our Lord in Gethsemane. One would have thought that every one there present with the Lord in that time of bitter agony and exercise, as anticipating the sorrows of the cross, then immediately before Him, would have fully described the scene. But it is not so. Perhaps no one entered into it more feelingly than that disciple whom Jesus loved, and who leaned on His bosom at the supper; but he gives us no details of it, and only makes the briefest allusion to it. Peter, so heavy with sleep there, tells us nothing about it. James, also, is entirely silent; but Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who might not have been near enough to have seen the Lord in such sorrow bowed down to the ground in earnest prayer, each give us a detailed report of it; and yet more remarkable still, after leaving the garden, and going over Cedron with His disciples, when they met Judas and his band of men, and, as the effect of the Lord's words, "they went backward and fell to the ground," John only mentions this.

Now these examples are surely enough to convince us, that the gospels were not written as men write a biography, by merely gathering all the well-attested facts they could, and putting them together, for it must be clear to every fair mind this was not the case, but that each wrote according to the direction and guidance of the Spirit who inspired him.

Instead, therefore, of regarding the four gospels as the writings merely of four biographers however true, and trying, as people say, to study "the harmonies of the gospel," we find that each writer had a distinct and definite line of truth to convey, in no wise contradictory of each other, but each gospel written with a definite object. This, when seen, enhances each of the four gospels immensely, and our interest in them becomes largely intensified. It is intelligible enough that four architects might give us the plans of a square building, each taking a separate side; and although they were all of them different in some particulars, so that no one could understand them till he knew that each represented a different side of the same building, yet *then*, and *not till then*, would he get the true idea of what the building really was. So with the Gospels. Matthew clearly sets forth the Messiah in relation to God's ancient people, the Jews; Mark, the Son of God as a perfect Servant; Luke, Son of God born of Mary, yet Son of Man; and John, the Son who came forth from the Father, came into the world, and went back to the Father.

Because Matthew presents Him to us as the Messiah promised to Israel, to set up His kingdom on earth, as predicted by prophets, He is at once introduced as "the Son of David, the Son of Abraham." His genealogy is traced, not on Mary's side, but in connection with Joseph, as legal Heir to the throne. In the first chapter He is called Jesus, meaning Jehovah our Savior; and though born of Mary, is really surnamed -- God with us. In the second chapter He is said to be "born King of the Jews," and the prophet Micah is referred to as to Bethlehem being the place of His birth into this world; and there it is added, to show the infinite glory of His Person, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." In the third chapter, John, His forerunner according to Isaiah and Malachi, called on the nation to "repent," because the King was there, and ready to set up the kingdom of heaven. It was therefore "at hand." In Matthew only we have the expression, "kingdom of heaven," for this the Jewish people were taught to expect by the prophets; and Moses especially spoke of "the days of heaven upon earth" (Deut. 11:21). The expression, "kingdom of heaven," occurs about twenty-eight times in this Gospel. John the Baptist had to seal his testimony of "the gospel of the kingdom," first by imprisonment, and then by death. Jesus, however, takes up the same testimony, and adds to it the signs of His being the Messiah, by miraculous power, and gives in the sermon on the mount, the principles on which the kingdom must be set up, then touches a leper and by His word heals him, and also a palsied man. The healing of the one showed, that however degraded and unclean the nation might be, there was grace and power in Him beyond all ordinances, however good, for healing; and on the other hand, however helpless the people, He could not only heal the body but forgive sins. In the tenth chapter, He gives

power to His apostles also to work miracles, and preach the glad tidings of the kingdom, which was a further testimony of His Messiahship. Afterward we find Him feeding thousands once and again on a few loaves and fishes, and baskets of fragments remaining after every one was *filled*. Now why was this? It was a further testimony to His being the Messiah, because it had been written in Psa. 132, "I will abundantly bless her provision, I will satisfy her poor with bread." So we might go through the Gospel if our space permitted, only we cannot fail to see that it sets before us a line of instruction found nowhere else in Scripture, and yet in perfect keeping with all that had gone before or came after. It is well to notice, that in the twelfth chapter the Messiah is so entirely rejected by the Jews, that they take counsel to destroy Him (v. 14); in the last chapter of Matthew He is seen risen from the dead, but *not ascended*, arisen Man on the earth. And why is this? Because the *Messiah's* sphere as such is not ascension glory as His church will have with Him as Bridegroom, Head of His body, and Lord of all; but His earthly people, while they will know Him as having died for that nation, and therefore risen, will know Him as reigning here on earth, before His ancients gloriously, and sitting in David's throne; thus fulfilling all the prophecies of Him, and all the promises to Abraham and his seed. *Then* of the Jewish people it will be truly said, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." This they will know and rejoice in, when they sing, "Bless Jehovah, O my soul, and all that is within me bless his holy name . . . Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases" (Isa. 33:24; Psa. 103:1, 3). Such a truly Jewish character has this Gospel, that here only the expression of the wicked people, "His blood be on us, and on our children," is recorded; and in neither of the other Gospels have we such particular and prophetic instruction as to the great tribulation, the coming of the Lord to Israel, and His judging the nations.

Mark's Gospel. Here the Lord is looked at more particularly as to His service. We have therefore no genealogy, no account of His birth, and His ways are traced from the baptism of John to His sitting at the right hand of God. Throughout, as the elect and righteous Servant, He is seen doing most perseveringly the will of Him that sent Him. We find the word translated "immediately," "straightway" and "anon" much more frequently than in any other Gospel. The looks and feelings of the perfect Servant are referred to in a way we have not elsewhere. We are told that "He *looked* round about on them with anger"; that "He *sighed*"; and that "He *sighed deeply* in his spirit." He went on so diligently serving with His disciples, that "they had no leisure so much as to eat"; and again, "They could not so much as eat bread," so that His friends went out to lay hold on Him, for they said, "He is beside himself." The sufferings of Gethsemane and on the cross are briefly recorded, and, having accomplished the work of redemption, as risen from among the dead He sends His servants into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature, and afterward, though received up into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God, He confirms their ministry with signs following.

As has often been remarked, in Mark we have the events of our Lord put before us more in historical or chronological order, while in Matthew they are arranged more in regard to dispensational order, and in Luke they are more in moral order.

Luke's line of things in his Gospel is clearly Jesus as "Son of man." As born of Mary He is contrasted with John who was born of Elizabeth, the son of Zacharias. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born Son of God, and Son of the Highest; but John was only the prophet of the Highest, and though he was honored to be the forerunner of our Lord, his testimony was, that he was unworthy to loose the latchet of His shoe. It is in Luke's Gospel only that we have the account of our Lord at the age of twelve years, and that He "increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

The genealogy of our Lord is traced in Luke to the "seed of the woman." We, therefore, have Mary's line through Heli brought out; through David also, for she was of the house and lineage of David; and Abraham, Noah, and Enos to Adam, because in this Gospel He is looked at as Son of man.

In Luke's account of Him, He is not only brought before us praying on seven different occasions, but in Gethsemane also His humanity is specially marked out in His being in an agony, and praying more earnestly, when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. Here, too, on the cross, He makes intercession for the transgressors, and comforts the penitent malefactor with the assurance of present salvation -- not mentioned elsewhere. In resurrection also, when some were terrified because they thought He was a spirit, He said, "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them (Luke 24). Now, why are these details as to the actual resurrection of our Lord from among the dead given us in Luke's Gospel only? Is it not because He is there by the Spirit of God brought before us as Son of man? But further, after His resurrection, He ministered the word to them, gave commission to preach the gospel, bade them tarry in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit to endue them with power from on high, and having led them out as far as to Bethany, and blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. The Man Christ Jesus, whom they had seen and known as incarnate, as dead on the cross, as buried in the sepulcher, and as risen from among the dead, they saw ascend up to heaven, till their eyes could no longer trace Him. Having now their understandings opened to understand the Scriptures, they were filled with such joy, that they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.

In John's Gospel we have the Deity of the Son, and sent by the Father into the world, in richest and abounding grace to us. In it we have the endearing relationship of children of God by faith in Christ Jesus clearly set forth, so that duties and

affections might be formed and maintained suitable to such relationship. There is, therefore, no genealogy in John. He was “the Word” in the beginning, before creation, with God, and was God -- a *person* with God, and yet eternally divine, for He was God, and the Creator of everything that was made. In due time “the word was made [or became] flesh and dwelt among us.” If we have the human side of Jesus as Son of man, born of Mary, in Luke, and as Son of David, “king of the Jews,” in Matthew, we have the divine side of our Lord and of His ways in John. He is the Fountain of Life, for “in him was life “in the first chapter; the Source of eternal life to every one that believeth, in the third chapter; the One who gives an unending supply of living water in the fourth chapter. He, the Son, quickens or gives life to whom He will in the fifth chapter; and is the Bread of Life, (through His flesh, which He gave for the life of the world), in the sixth chapter. In the seventh chapter Christ Himself is the alone Source of that living enjoyment which enables testimony for Him abundantly to flow out. With all His amazing grace to man, His words are rejected in the eighth chapter; His works in the ninth chapter; and not believed on as the Good Shepherd, because they were not His sheep, in the tenth chapter. In the eleventh chapter, as has been often pointed out, He is rejected as Son of God; in the twelfth, first as Son of David, and then as Son of man; and after having shown Himself to be the Resurrection and the Life, in bringing Lazarus out of the grave to life again, He willingly goes into death as the Son of man lifted up to save sinners. The Corn of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or He would be alone. Solemn moment beyond all description. He then keeps the passover, Judas goes out, and when alone with His eleven true ones, He instructs us as to our course during the time of His absence, promises to send the Holy Spirit to abide with us forever, bids us to be without fear or care, but to believe on Him; and though the path be one of tribulation, to be of good cheer; and assures us that He will come again and take us to the Father’s house, to be where He is forever. Having said these things, He commends them and all who shall believe on Him through their word to the Father, before He goes to Calvary’s cross to glorify the Father, and finish the work that He gave Him to do. Gethsemane is only just touched on in John, and at the sound of the Savior’s voice, those who came to take Him went backward, and fell to the ground; and on the cross, He is presented as saying, “I thirst,” in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, in bringing Him vinegar to drink, according to Psa. 69. All then being fulfilled as it is written, He said, “It is finished,” and bowed His head and gave up His spirit, according to His word in the tenth chapter, when speaking of laying down His life “no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.” It is the Son here glorifying the Father, whose prayer, when under the shadow of the cross, had been, “Father, glorify thy name.”

In beautiful keeping with this divine side of Christ in John’s Gospel, we find only here the account of His message by Mary after His resurrection, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God and your God”; He meets His disciples with “Peace

be unto you,” fills them with joy, for they “were glad when they saw the Lord,” thus giving them a taste of the blessedness of His being in the midst; and communicates risen life by breathing on them, and saying, “Receive ye the Holy Spirit.” Eight days after He meets Thomas, a type of the Jewish remnant who will not believe till they see Him; and in the last chapter a striking picture is given of millennial blessing when He will formally take His place as the last Adam, and reign before His ancients gloriously.

If it be asked why we have thus glanced at each of the four Gospels, our reply is, In order that it may be clearly seen, that while each honored the Lord, the lines of truth in all differed from each other, though there was nothing contradictory, and all divinely perfect. The most positive proof is afforded by it, that all was written according to the purpose of one Master mind, and could be none other than the ministry of the Holy Spirit. When we consider how much of the Gospels is made up of our Lord’s own words, and works, and ways, how frequently the Old Testament Scriptures are authoritatively quoted, and how much of their prophetic teaching was actually fulfilled; and when we add to all this, that the spirit of them all is so manifestly according to the operations and testimony of Him who is the Glorifier and Testifier of Jesus, and Guide into all the truth, it is impossible not to discern the clearest possible proof of their being inspired, or God-breathed.

The Acts and the Epistles

In the Acts of the Apostles, we have the coming of the Holy Spirit to indwell and baptize believers into “one body,” by uniting them to Christ the Head, and to one another. This work of the Holy Spirit has been going on ever since in those who have believed on our Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of the soul. At Pentecost they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Peter too was filled with the Holy Spirit, and preached the gospel; and the remainder of the book gives us the various actings of the Holy Spirit who had come down in consequence of the accomplished redemption-work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Besides filling saints for the service and praise of God, we trace the Holy Spirit’s Godhead, personal actings, and hatred to sin; His sovereignty, power, holiness, and truth. The Gospel was preached not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles, and the servants of God, principally Peter and Paul, were strengthened and filled with the Spirit to set forth a crucified, risen, ascended, glorified, and coming Savior with abundance of blessing to souls. It was a time of the Spirit’s power, which gave no quarter to selfishness and covetousness. The record of it too is of the Spirit, for it magnifies God, and honors our Lord Jesus Christ, and the authority of Scripture.

We have referred already to the epistles of the apostle Paul, and have given instances in proof of the inspiration of God in his writings. It is well, however, to remember, that our Lord Jesus repeatedly spoke to him from heaven as to what he should minister to the saints; but we may notice on other occasions the way in which he so constantly points to the Lord and honors Him as such. For instance, in the second brief

Epistle to the Thessalonian believers, he speaks of Him as the “Lord Jesus Christ” ten or eleven times; in Phil. 1 he speaks of Him as Lord or Christ seventeen or eighteen times, and always with reverence and honor; and he seems in all his epistles to write in such a Christ-exalting way, that he is not able to write many verses without turning to Him. Can anything more clearly demonstrate the work and inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

Though Peter’s line of instruction to the saints is very different from Paul’s, yet when Paul addresses the Ephesian saints, or Peter the converted Jews when scattered, they are both so filled with the love of God, that before they begin their communications to them, they lift their hearts in praise, and say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Peter’s line as well as Paul’s is Christ; but Peter, especially in his first epistle, points to an unseen Savior as the fountain of “joy unspeakable and full of glory”; though such too “greatly rejoice” in Him, who has accomplished such a work in His death and resurrection, as gives us title to an incorruptible inheritance reserved in heaven for us, while we are kept for it.

John, however, who recognized the workings of infidelity even in his day, is so conscious of the apostolic ministry being the word of God, that he declares it to be the true test of vital Christianity. He says, “We are of God; he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us” (1 John 4:6).

Though James addresses his letter to the twelve tribes, he recognizes “beloved brethren” among them, and ministers to them as such, ascribing their being begotten of God to “the word of truth”; and though not entering upon the special truths of Christianity, he instructs, quotes from the prophets, and enjoins them to practical piety in the prospect of the coming of the Lord. With James, the man who *says* he has faith can only *show* it by his works. The more the epistle is pondered, the more clearly the Spirit’s teaching can be recognized in it.

Jude, though he treats of the apostasy, tracing it from its root to its full development and judgment, of which Enoch prophesied, exhorts the faithful to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints, to keep themselves in the love of God, praying in the Holy Spirit, and building up themselves on their most holy faith, while seeking the good of others, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All these Epistles, though written at different times, and by different instruments, tell us of unity of purpose and object.

The Revelation

When we look into the Book of Revelation, every precaution seems to be taken to guard souls from hesitating to accept it as a God-breathed or inspired writing; so much so, that it appears as if the present widespread thought of its being a Book of such obscurity and difficulty that no one can understand it, and that it was never intended to be read very much, had been anticipated. We are therefore not only told it is “the Revelation of Jesus Christ,” but so thoroughly divine in its origin that it is

what “*God gave unto him* to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.” John also was commanded by the Lord, saying, “Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter [or after these].” Nothing then as to inspiration can be clearer; and as if this would be to some not enough, John was “in the Spirit,” in order to see the visions, and having seen them, he is told twice in the first chapter to “Write”; and write too not only what he had seen, but the things that are now going on, and the things that will be after these things. In the second and third chapters, which show us the things which are, we are seven times told to hearken to “what the Spirit saith unto the assemblies”: so fully are we in the region and sphere of the Holy Spirit’s activities on earth.

And further, the Apostle was by the Spirit taught to distinguish between what was of Satan and what of God in the visions which passed before him. In ch. 17 he was in the Spirit, and saw the harlot in all her worldly attire and luxuriousness, and self-complacency in the wilderness: in chapter 21 the Spirit also showed him the bride so dear to our Savior’s heart, the Lamb’s wife, but he had to *go up in the Spirit* for that blessed vision. He says the angel “carried me away *in the Spirit* to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God,” etc. At the end of the Book of Revelation we are told that “the Spirit and the bride say, Come” in response to our Lord’s presentation of Himself as “the bright and morning star.” So that whatever we may think, the Bible does not close its communications to us without assuring us, that those led and taught of the Spirit will look up to our Lord Jesus Christ where He is, and say, “Come.” Till that moment, His grace will be with us in all its sufficiency and reality.

But if the opening of the Book gives such encouragement to the reader of it, and to any who hear it read, the close is solemn beyond all thought in proof of its being divinely given truth: truth too which harmonizes and is interwoven by lines running all through Scripture, and this makes it so very solemn. It is said, “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” How solemnly all this admonishes us not only to read and hear what the Book saith, but to receive its sayings into our hearts and minds in all simplicity as it is written; for if our Lord sends this Book to us from heaven, we may be sure that He would say of it no less than when He spake on earth saying, “Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.” We have then in reading Scripture to do with God, “not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe” (1 Thess. 2:13).

10. Quotations from the Old Testament

It is deeply interesting to observe with what care the Holy Spirit, by the various writers or speakers in the New Testament, quotes from the Books of the Old Testament. Of course this work, like all God's works, must be perfect; but such accuracy is observed that it is not uncommon for a quotation to end in the middle of a sentence, and for obvious reasons. We all remember the account of our Lord's reading from the prophet Isaiah in the synagogue, and that when He had uttered the words, "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord," He closed the book and sat down. Now why was this? Why did He not read on? Because the next words, "the day of vengeance is at hand" did not *then* apply, as His mission was one of grace, not judgment. But in its literal application to the Jews, the time of their blessing and of divine vengeance will come together; for when the Lord appears as "Sun of righteousness" with healing to the faithful remnant of Israel, He will so execute judgment on the wicked, that they shall be ashes under the feet of those who are blessed. The application, therefore, of that Scripture by our Lord, and up to this time, can go no further than the acceptable year of the Lord, however rapidly the day of vengeance may be approaching.

On turning to Rom. 8, we find a quotation from Psalms 44, "as it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter"; and there the Apostle stops, because, on referring to the Psalm, the next words are such as could not be now expressed by a child of God, who is loved by the Father as He loved His Son. They could, however, be the utterance of a Jewish remnant who know not the Father, nor the blessedness of the accomplished redemption of the Son. Such might add, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Jehovah? arise, cast us not off for ever. Wherefore hidest thou thy face," etc.; but it is not the Christian's utterance who knows the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free.

Look also at Rom. 10:15, which is a quotation from Isaiah 52, "As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things!" Now, why does the Apostle stop there in the middle of the sentence, and omit what follows? Because it is clear that what follows, "that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth," cannot have its fulfilment till the Lord Jesus takes His rightful place as Son of David, and reigns before His ancients gloriously as King of Israel.

In 1 Pet. 3 there is a quotation from Psalms 34, "The eyes of Jehovah are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of Jehovah is against them that do evil," and stops in the middle of a sentence; and why? Because the words which follow, "to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth," while literally applying to God's earthly people, the Jews, could never be applied to those who are saved from coming wrath, and instead of inheriting the earth, are looking for "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven." Do not such things show us the

perfect accuracy with which the holy Scriptures come from God to us?

But take one or two more examples. Psalms 68 is quoted in Eph. 4. We read, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," and stops in the middle of the sentence, because the next words, "yea, for the rebellious also," though they will be literally fulfilled as to rebellious Israel, could never be used toward us, who now through grace, have believed the gospel. In millennial times, when Christ will be known as Israel's Redeemer and King, they will deeply and touchingly feel the marvelous character of the grace, above all else, which will give them "gifts" "from the hand of their long-rejected Messiah."

Again, in Heb. 2, the writer quotes freely from Psalms 8, in reference to Jesus having been made a *little lower than the angels* for the suffering of death, whom we see *now crowned with glory and honor*, and that He will have all things put in subjection under His feet, though that has not yet taken place. Now Psalms 8 is millennial, and applies strictly to Jesus, as the last Adam, who will take His rightful place of dominion over all God's works, "all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas," when it will be said, "O Jehovah, our Lord, how excellent is thy name *in all the earth*." It is obvious that the Apostle, by the Spirit, only quotes from this Psalm enough to chew that Jesus, who has tasted death for every man, is now "crowned with glory and honor," and will, by-and-by, have all things put under his feet.

These examples are enough to show, not only the divine authority of the Old Testament writings, and regarded by the Apostles as final and conclusive, but they also reveal to us the fine and delicate workmanship of the Holy Spirit in putting together for our profit the Scriptures of the New Testament.

It is a point not to be overlooked, that the Old Testament Scriptures are either quoted or alluded to in the New many hundreds of times.

11. The Importance of Bowing to the Authority of Scripture

Nothing can exceed the importance that our Lord and the servants of God in all ages have given to Scripture. Our Lord exposed the infidelity of the Sadducees as to resurrection, by saying to them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God," and by a quotation from Ex. 3:6. He also put the Pharisees to silence as to His Person, by quoting Psalms 110:1. We are told that the disciples were perplexed, because "they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead." The Lord also sharply rebuked the two unhappy ones walking to Emmaus, by saying unto them,

O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

What an exposition of the Old Testament this must have been!

Is it astonishing that they said,

Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?

The Corinthian believers were sadly wrong, because they knew not the Scripture as to the resurrection of the body. The Galatian believers got wrong because they were adding "circumcision" to the work of Christ, in order to make their salvation more secure; and the Apostle, by the Spirit, uses Scripture to set them right. The Colossian saints were not quite free as to ritualism and rationalism, because they got away from Scripture, and therefore were "not holding the Head" -- not in communion with the Lord Jesus Christ as Head of the body, the assembly. The Thessalonian believers were not clear on some points as to the Lord's coming, and were therefore sorrowful, which they would not have been had they known the truth as to the resurrection of the bodies of those who are Christ's, the change of the living, and the rapture to meet the Lord in the air.

The Hebrew saints were some of them in danger of giving up Christianity, and going back to Judaism, because they knew not the truth which the Scriptures teach as to the eternal efficacy of the one offering of Christ once for all, and the liberty to enter into the holiest with boldness by the blood of Jesus since the veil was rent, and Jesus appears in the presence of God for us as our great High Priest. Could anything more be required than the consideration of these facts, to induce us to read and meditate on the word of God for soul-blessing, and guidance as to life and walk? Thank God, the Holy Ghost indwells us, is able to teach us, and guide us into all the truth, so that an Apostle could say of believers, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."

12. *Alleged Inaccuracies of the New Testament*

Before leaving our consideration of the New Testament, it may be well to look at some more of the alleged inaccuracies with which infidels and professing Christians have unscrupulously assailed the holy Scriptures.

Three Days and Three Nights

It has been said, that because our Lord died on Friday at the ninth hour, was buried that day, and rose again from the dead on Sunday, the first day of the week, that, therefore, it is not true to say He was "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth," as our Lord declared that the Son of man would be (Matt. 12:40). But let it be observed, that according to the Jewish mode of calculating time, there is no inaccuracy in this statement. In our day man has changed the scriptural order of almost everything possible, and instead of speaking of an evening and morning being a day, modern Gentiles say that a day consists of a morning and evening, and so calculate accordingly. And if the Jews reckoned any part of a day, as part of a night and a day (for the evening and the morning in Gen. 1 made a day), the alleged inaccuracy wholly disappears.

For Friday, up to six o'clock, would be spoken of as one night and day, Friday evening and Saturday morning another night and day, and thus the difficulty is removed.

Our Lord's Temptations

It has been alleged, that because Matthew and Luke, who both recorded in their gospels our Lord's temptations from the devil, do not narrate them in the same order, must be inaccuracy. But suppose one of the Evangelists, Matthew, relates them in their *chronological* order, and Luke puts them in *moral* sequence, or according to the severity of the temptations, and therefore puts the severest, when Satan quotes Scripture, last, where then is the difficulty?

Drink No Longer Water

It has been said by learned men, Can we believe that to be inspired which tells Timothy to "drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach's sake, and thine often infirmities"? And again, "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments"? Why not? Does it not show that the Holy Spirit considers our bodily need, and the books and writings His servants find helpful in His blessed service?

Feeding the Multitudes

One of the boldest attacks on the truth of late years has been the statement that when our Lord fed the thousands on a few loaves and fishes, with baskets of fragments remaining as not needed, it is impossible they could have all eaten, and *must* have had a meal before. But such infidel statements completely leave out God, and it may be said to those who so speak, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." As to the miracle of feeding so many on so little, we are told "they were all filled," and on referring to Psa. 132:15, we see it was only the fulfilment of what had been predicted ages before, as a true sign of Messiah, "I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread." Could there have been a more beautiful fulfilment of this prophecy than our Lord's feeding the multitude? And ought not the Jews to have known by it that He was the Messiah?

The Passover and Lord's Supper

In a theological work just published, among many other charges against the holy Scriptures, we are told that Matthew, Mark, and Luke made a "mistake" in assuming "that the Lord's Supper was the Passover feast"; "that the two were regarded as identical"; and also that our Lord "had desired to eat the Passover with them, but He did not eat it." There is nothing new in these charges, though they are very far from the truth.

1. On turning to the gospels, we find that Matthew, Mark, and Luke, each, according to the line of things given him by the Spirit, supplies us with particulars as to the eating of the Passover. John usually takes the divine side, and enters little

into Jewish circumstances. His gospel is founded on their rejection of the Messiah, as stated in the beginning, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not."

With regard to the Passover, Matthew says that our Lord sent some of His disciples into the city to make ready the Passover. They said unto Jesus,

Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples . . . and they made ready *the Passover*. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. And as they did *eat*, etc. (Matt. 26).

Mark's account is the sending forth of two of His disciples into the city, much in the same way. They were to say to the good man of the house,

Where is the guest-chamber where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? . . . and they made ready *the Passover*. And in the evening, he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and did eat, etc. (Mark 14).

Luke gives the same account as to the furnished room. He tells us, that the two disciples sent were Peter and John. They were to say,

Where is the guest-chamber where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? . . . and they made ready *the Passover*. And when the hour was come he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God (Luke 22).

Thus far the account of these three Evangelists is entirely about the Passover. Where, then, is the mistake? Where is there the smallest evidence, that up to the actual eating of the Passover the disciples had an idea of its being anything but the Passover feast? Where, then, are the writers' mistakes? Where is there the faintest intimation that the Passover and Lord's Supper were assumed by these inspired writers to be identical? How appalling are such rash charges, and how calculated to promote infidelity, and to bring the holy Scriptures into contempt!

2. We have just seen that the Lord *desired to eat* the Passover with His disciples; that He sent Peter and John to procure a room where He might *eat the Passover* with His disciples; that at the appointed hour He and the twelve sat down, and as they sat *and did eat*, Jesus said, "I will not *eat any more* thereof." Referring to Judas, He also said, "He that *eateth bread with me*," etc. Can there be a doubt, then, that our Lord did eat the Passover? How very serious for any one without a shadow of proof to say, "He did not eat of it!"

The fact is, that the Passover having been eaten by our Lord with His disciples according to Jehovah's mind, for the last time on earth, before the kingdom comes, in the immediate anticipation of His rejection as Messiah, and His death as a Sacrifice for sin, His resurrection and ascension, He institutes another thing which was not a Jewish feast, but a Christian ordinance, and of very different import. Though they both set forth to faith the Savior's death and blood-shedding, the Passover was a memorial of the blood of the paschal lamb in Egypt, sheltering from judgment; but in the Lord's Supper, the

wine is to faith the memorial of the blood of Christ which speaks to the believer of remission of sins, and of his being perfected forever by that one offering (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 10:2-20). The blood of Christ assures us of redemption accomplished, sins purged, conscience purged, and the worshiper purged, thus having boldness to enter into the holiest. It would, therefore, be impossible for those who received God's testimony to the eternal efficacy of "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," to regard the Passover and the Lord's Supper as identical. It is then impossible that Matthew, Mark, and Luke could have assumed that "the Lord's Supper was the Passover feast."

As to the Supper being instituted, Matthew says, "As they were eating"; Mark, "As they did eat." Luke gives a fuller account of the details of the Passover feast, and adds that our Lord said, in reference to eating it, "I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." After this, "he took bread [a loaf], and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for *you*." Mark says, "shed for *many*," and Matthew, "shed for *many for the remission of sins*." We ask, then, was there anything like this in the Passover feast? Is it not clear that it was at the close of the eating of the Passover that our Lord instituted His Supper? It is well, however, to remember, that since then our Lord has spoken from heaven about His supper; and as, by His rejection by the nation, the kingdom is in abeyance, He has taught us that, "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death TILL HE COME" (1 Cor. 11:2-26). We need scarcely add, that His "coming" for His saints will be before His "appearing and his kingdom."

The Call of Abraham

It has been widely taught by learned men, that discrepancies abound in Stephen's speech before his martyrdom; it, therefore, calls for a few remarks.

It is well to remember, that Acts 6 tells us that Stephen was "full of the Holy Ghost . . . full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles . . . they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake . . . and they saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." We ask, then, was he likely to have spoken with accuracy, or not?

Add to all this, that his faithful speech was before the Sanhedrim, who were well instructed in the history of the people of Israel, and especially as to Moses and Abraham, and the Pentateuch, so that any historical discrepancy would have at once been detected by them. But of such a thing there is not a trace.

Let us now look at some of the charges of modern philosophers. One is, that in Acts 7:4, we are taught concerning Abraham, that the death of his father was *after the call*, and not, as according to Gen. 11:32, before it. If the accounts of the call of Abraham be carefully examined, no such phrase can be found, as "the call," because there was evidently more than

one. Stephen speaks of the God of glory having appeared to Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said,

Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee" (Acts 7:2, 3).

The effect of this was, that he left his country, and, it may be, many of his kindred; but his father accompanied him, and Sarah, and Lot, and dwelt in Haran. There they remained long enough for souls to be gotten in Haran (Gen. 11:31;12:5). Then it seems God called him to get out from his country, kindred, and father's house, and come into a land that He would show him (Gen. 12:1). The effect of this call was, that he departed out of Haran. This is confirmed by Stephen saying, "from thence [Haran] when his father was dead, he [God] removed him into this land"; showing unquestionably that there was a second interposition on the part of Jehovah. Now, where is there discrepancy between the account in Genesis, and the testimony of Stephen? Nay, rather, Is not the comparison of the two accounts a further testimony to the perfect accuracy of Scripture, and of both having divine authorship?

The Years of Moses

It is alleged that there is in Acts 7:23, 30, 36, the distinct mention of three periods of forty years, of which only the last is mentioned in the Pentateuch. But if we turn to Ex. 7, we are told that "Moses was fourscore years old . . . when they spake unto Pharaoh" v. 7). Now these fourscore years of Moses exactly agree with Stephen's account, that he was forty years old when it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel, and was forty years after in Madian. This also fits in perfectly with Ex. 2:11, 15, and 7:7. Stephen makes the age of Moses to be one hundred and twenty years altogether; and in Deut. 22:2, and 34:7, he is said to have died at the age of one hundred and twenty years. Now, where is there any discrepancy?

The Terror of Moses

We believe there is no remedy if men have not the fear of God before their eyes. Take another example, to show with what levity and trifling some of the learned in our day have published their views—some more of the last words of God's faithful martyr, when full of the Holy Ghost, and wisdom, and faith. It is said, that "the terror of Moses at the bush spoken of in Acts 7:32, is not mentioned in Ex. 3:3." It is quite true it is not mentioned in the third verse, but in the sixth verse we find the words, "And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Could any testimony more clearly confirm the agreement of the martyr's teaching with the prophet's statement?

Saul's Sight of the Lord Jesus

It is widely taught that there are contradictions in the two accounts of the conversion of Saul, in Acts 9:7 and 22: 9. Let us carefully compare them. Both Saul and those who traveled

with him are mentioned. Saul saw the Lord Jesus Christ, was blinded by the light, heard Him speak words to him personally, addressing him in the Hebrew tongue, calling him by name, and Saul replied. The men who were with him saw the light, were alarmed, did not speak a word, saw no one, but heard a voice or sound. In Acts 9:7 we read,

The men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice [or sound] but seeing no man.

In Acts 22:9, we read,

They that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me.

In these Scriptures there is surely no discrepancy.

Holding Jesus by the Feet

It is often said that the statement that "the women held Jesus by the feet and worshiped him," is a palpable contradiction of His command to Mary not to touch Him.

In Matt. 28:9, we read that as "they went [according to the angel's word] to tell his disciples, behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet and worshiped him."

In John 20:17, when Mary seems ready to approach the Lord in her accustomed manner,

Jesus said unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

It seems to us impossible that any one can see the beauty of these two Scriptures, and the entire absence of contradiction, unless the different lines of truth and the relationships of which each evangelist treats are discerned. This too resolves many other difficulties. The moral perfection of Scripture is then most striking.

In Matthew we have, from first to last, facts which are for the most part narrated as having a Jewish bearing. Hence we find much of that kind of instruction which is not found in the other gospels. When our Lord spake of His death and resurrection, He added, "But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee" (Matt. 26:32). The Messiah having been rejected by the Jews and Jerusalem, He now intimates that when raised from among the dead, He will still recognize the "poor of the flock" in Galilee, who will thus be a sample of the future remnant spoken of by the prophets that will be brought into their promised blessing at His appearing and kingdom. This is doubtless why we have no *ascension in Matthew*. This is also why the angel sent the message to the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee, which was afterwards confirmed by our Lord, and acted on by the disciples (Matt. 28:5, 10, 16). It is here that Jesus as Messiah, having died for that "nation," is now able, on the ground of His work, to recognize relationship with the faithful residue. Hence, in keeping with this, the women are allowed to hold Him by the feet and worship Him; for the Jewish thought is to have Messiah bodily with them on earth. This will be manifested in due time.

But John's is a different line of things. All through his

gospel we have the Father and the Son. Jesus is here looked at as having taught believers that they were loved of the Father, given to Him by the Father, and that their destiny was the Father's house. When He went back to the Father, He spoke of sending the Holy Spirit to be with us and in us during all the time of His absence; and that He would come again and receive us unto Himself, that where He is there we might be also. Therefore, in John 20:17, we have the new relationships of being God's children, and Christ's brethren, announced, not in connection with a Messiah seen on earth, but with the Lord of glory, not here but in heaven. It is in principle Christianity and not Judaism. Mary therefore was forbidden to "touch" Him, but was sent to tell others of His sphere henceforth being in ascension and not on earth. They were to know Him, serve Him, and honor Him as gone back to the Father. The Christian's relationships therefore are heavenly, and for ever. Precious message!

Go to *my brethren*, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

O, the untold blessedness of these new relationships, founded on Christ's work of eternal redemption!

Sin and Transgression

Though the books of Moses and the Gospels have been the portions of the sacred writings against which the shafts of scepticism have been more generally thrust, yet the Epistles have not wholly escaped their censure. We only select one instance, out of many, from a published pamphlet now before us.

It is alleged as a proof of contradiction, that in Rom. 2 it is said, "For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law"; and in the fourth chapter, "Where no law is, there is no transgression." In the accuser's mind sinning and transgression are here the same thought, hence to perish without law, and yet for there to be no transgression without law, to him is a contradiction; but it is not so. We are told that "all have sinned," from Adam downwards; but the people of Israel were also transgressors, because they went across God's positive commands. Adam also transgressed in doing what God prohibited (Rom. 5:12, 14).

The accuracy of Rom. 2:12 is seen in that not having been under the law, they will not be judged by it: but having a conscience and the knowledge of good and evil since "sin entered into the world," they will be judged on other grounds. Such may be referred to in Rom. 1:18 and following verses. The accuracy of Rom. 4:15, is seen in the holiness of the principle, that if there had been no law given, there could be nothing to be disobeyed, no transgression. Speaking generally, then, all Gentiles and Jews are sinners by nature, and practice -- all are "under sin," "have sinned," and come short of the glory of God"; but the children of Israel, who willingly put themselves under law, have been proved to be transgressors, and when Jews and Gentiles are classed together another word is used, the word "offences," for all are offenders, though not all transgressors, inasmuch as Gentiles have not the law -- "Who was delivered for *our offences*, and was raised again for

our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

It may be well to add, that the word "sin" is used about thirty times in only two chapters in Romans, the sixth and seventh. It is called "the old man," "the flesh," which the believer is not in as to his standing, though it is still in him, but to faith he is righteously delivered from, because "our old man is crucified" and "dead with Christ." "Sins" are forgiven, because they have been borne, suffered for, and atoned for by Christ, whose blood "was shed for many for the remission of sins." We read, therefore, of remission of sins, and of our old man (the nature that did the sins) being crucified with Christ; and these are important distinctions. We find "sin," "sins," "offences," and "transgression," used in this epistle and elsewhere with the greatest precision.

The Sixth Hour in John 19:14

The question is, If Mark tells us that Jesus was crucified at "the third hour," and Matthew in accordance with Mark's testimony, says, "from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour," how can John possibly be correct in saying that the trial of our adorable Lord before Pilate was not ended till "about the sixth hour"?

If, however, it be true, as is generally accepted, that John's gospel was the last book of Scripture which was written, say about thirty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, and by that time the Jewish mode of reckoning a day, from about six of one evening to about six in the next evening, had pretty generally given way to the Roman mode of reckoning a day, as we now do, from midnight to midnight, then all thought of discrepancy in these passages of Scripture vanishes. This would make the ending of the trial to be at six in the morning, and the time of crucifixion to be nine.

Accepting, then, the above-named thought that John, unlike the other evangelists, used Roman time, and that about three hours intervened between the end of the trial and the actual crucifixion of our precious Lord and Savior, let us see, from the brief Scripture record we have, what transpired during these three hours. What hours of sorrow and suffering they must have been to Him!

First of all, we read, after the wicked trial by infuriated men led on by Satan, that the holy Sufferer was "scourged," which must have taken up some time; then He was brought into the Pretorium, and the whole band of soldiers were gathered unto Him. There they stripped Him of His own clothes, and put on Him a scarlet robe. There too they "platted a crown of thorns," "put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, king of the Jews!" The enmity of the heart of man to the Holy Son of God was further manifested by their spitting upon Him, and taking the reed and smiting Him upon the head. All this outrage and other indignities must have extended over some time, for, in addition to all that we have noticed, it is said, "After that they had mocked him," etc., intimating that the Savior was publicly held in derision for some time. Lastly, we find that they took the robe from off Him, and put His own raiment on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

All through these three hours the two malefactors were most likely being tried by Pilate; for, as our Lord was the first to be crucified, it is more than probable that He had the precedence in the trial. The whole account seems to imply this. And as the Scriptures of the prophets could not but have their fulfilment, the thieves must be crucified with Him, for He must not only bear the sins of many, but “be numbered with the transgressors.” Considering all these things, the three hours’ interval between the end of the Savior’s trial and His crucifixion may easily be accounted for.

The Lamb of God is now led on to Calvary, bearing His own cross till they compelled a man of Cyrene to bear it after Him. On the road, He addressed the weeping women, and enjoined them not to weep for Him, but for themselves and their children, because of what was coming upon them. Then reaching Calvary, He was most cruelly nailed to the cross, fulfilling truly the words of the prophet,

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted; yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

It was also blessedly true that “He made intercession for the transgressors,” and that “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities,” for “it pleased the Lord to bruise him” (Isa. 53:5-12). After hanging three hours on the cross in agony and shame, there was darkness over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour, at the close of which, He so bitterly felt the anguish of being forsaken of God as our Sin-bearer, that He cried out, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?” and having fulfilled what had been written of Him, He said, “It is finished,” committed Himself to the Father, and gave up the ghost. The rending of the veil in the temple was, no doubt, God’s own testimony to the eternal efficacy of the death of the cross, by which He can now come out to sinners with the gospel, and the believer draw nigh to God by the blood of Jesus.

Looking briefly at the other parts of John’s gospel in which hours are named, we notice that our Lord said, in the eleventh chapter, “Are there not twelve hours in a day?” which may be regarded as true, whether we look at time according to the Jewish or Roman mode of calculation.

In the first chapter, we read that the two disciples came to Jesus “about the tenth hour,” which looks like ten in the morning, for they abode with Him that *day*, and we are not told of anything having been done by them on that day before that hour (John 1:35-39).

In the fourth chapter we find our Lord wearied with His journey, sitting on the well “about the sixth hour.” The time seems to have been six in the evening, for the disciples were gone away into the city to buy food, which might have been for the evening meal. After this the Lord went into the city, and many of the Samaritans believed, and besought Him to tarry with them: a kindness often shown in the East when the day was far spent (vv. 6, 8, 31, 40).

At the close of the fourth chapter we are told, that the nobleman’s sole was healed “at the seventh hour,” which most probably was seven in the evening. Our Lord said unto him,

“Go thy way, thy son liveth . . . and he went his way.” Now as Capernaum was a distance of several miles from Cana of Galilee, if he took his journey that night so as to reach his home in the morning, then it can easily be understood that when his servants met him, they should have said, “*Yesterday, at the seventh hour* the fever left him.” “So the father knew that it was at the *same hour*, in the which Jesus had said unto him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house” (John 4:46-54).

Every student of Scripture meets with difficulties, and finds much that he cannot understand; but, as we have said before, waiting on God in humility of mind, and in unfeigned dependence on the Holy Spirit, it is astonishing how He clears up the difficulties for us. It is, however, very remarkable how the Lord seems to have anticipated many of the objections which are raised by learned and scientific men, who rely on their own reasonings instead of simply accepting what God has said. In addition to some instances already pointed out, we may notice that the Lord authenticated the doctrine of the descent of the human race from one pair of parents from the beginning of the creation (Mark 10:6); of the taking away of all by the Deluge, except those who were in the ark (Matt. 24:37-39); of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone; of the miraculous supply of the manna; and the story of Jonah and the fish (some great fish, not necessarily a whale), and his mission to Nineveh and its effects.

In meditating on the Gospels it is scarcely possible not to notice the reverence and honor paid by our Lord to “the Scriptures.” Only think of Him as to this when on the cross. After being bodily suspended there for six hours with nails in His hands and His feet, in unmitigated and indescribable pain, with all the sorrow too that pressed upon His spirit of being betrayed by one, denied by another, and forsaken by all; when lover and friend had been put far from Him, and His acquaintance into darkness; when consciously too bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, the Holy One made sin for us; the wrath of God, the forsaking of God, the judgment of God for our sins falling upon Him, so that His soul was made an offering for sin; so occupied was He with the perfect will of Him who sent Him, that the silence of the unparalleled crisis was broken by the words, “I thirst”; and why? There remained one little Scripture that had not as yet had its fulfilment. What was it? “In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink” (Psa. 99:21). We therefore read, “Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus, therefore, had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished, and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost” (John 19:28-30). And we may well ask, when pondering such a scene as this, could anything be more perfect as sealing the divine authority of Scripture with His own blood? What true reverence for the sacred writings! What perfect subjection to every word of it! In a moment too of unutterable agony, depths of deepest sorrow, hours of darkness and unutterable woe, and above all, the forsaking of God. His heart broken with reproach, Satan bruising, men deriding in hateful enmity, every bone out of joint, yet manifesting perfect love to the Father,

perfect obedience to His word, perfect subjection to His will, perfect reverence for what is written, and perfect love to all who trust in Him. What perfections cluster around the cross at Golgotha! Happy those who know Him risen and ascended as the Object of their faith, and the One in whom they trust. What lessons this unparalleled scene reads to us as to reverence for Scripture, because it is the will and word of God; and how truly the Holy Spirit says of Him, that He hath "left us an example, that we should follow his steps."

13. The Bible -- Its Unity

If a friend handed to us a ponderous volume, consisting of sixty-six books, written by between thirty and forty persons, and at different times, extending over fifteen hundred years, and said, Notwithstanding all their differences there is a remarkable unity throughout, should we not be astonished? As a matter of fact, there is no such book as the Bible in this respect; nor could there be, unless all the writings it contained had been under the guidance of One mind, and its communications throughout given by the One Spirit.

One thing which would be likely to strike some persons in considering the principle of unity in a book, would be to compare the end with the beginning, and see if there be any connection as to similarity or contrast. In the Bible it is written, "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world" (Acts 15:18). Let us turn and examine a few Scriptures as to this.

The first words we find in the Bible are, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1), and, as a matter of fact, much of the Bible is about God's heavenly and earthly people; also as to things in connection with the present heaven and earth; and in the end of the Book we read of "a new heaven and a new earth" (Rev. 21:1).

In the beginning of the Book it is said, "Let there be light, and there was light"; afterward we are told that Christ is "the light of the world"; and in the end of the Book we read, that "the Lamb is the light thereof."

In the beginning, we read of a tree of life in the garden of Eden, from which man was afterward excluded through his sin; in the end we find "the tree of life" with its many fruits, and are taught that the faithful will eat of "the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Gen. 2:9; Rev. 2:7; 22:2).

A river too was in Eden, and at the end of Revelation we read of "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Gen. 2:10; Rev. 22:1).

In Gen. 2 we see the first man (figure of Him that was to come) and his help-meet, of whom he could say, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh"; and in Rev. 21 we have presented to us "the bride, the Lamb's wife . . . having the glory of God"; of whom it had been said, that He "nourisheth and cherisheth it," and that "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Rev. 21:9, 11; Eph. 5:29, 30).

In the earthly paradise man was in dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every creeping thing, and the name he gave to every living creature that was the name thereof; but toward the end of the Book the Lord Jesus, the last Adam, will bring this groaning creation into the liberty of the glory of the children of God, and have His rightful place as "Lord of all," having subdued all things unto Himself (Gen. 1:28; 2:19; Psalms 8; Phil. 2:10, 11; 3:21).

In the beginning we have Satan tempting, then sin, and the curse; and in the end, we see Satan in the lake of fire, sin taken away, righteousness dwelling, and no more curse. In the beginning sorrow and death; in the end, "no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Gen. 3; Rev. 20:10; 2 Pet. 3:13; 1 John 3:5; Rev. 21:1-4).

Surely then we find a remarkable unity of thought in the beginning and ending of the Bible, though the contrasts are most striking; because the Son of God had come meanwhile to accomplish redemption, destroy the works of the devil, take away sins, make good the promises, vindicate God in all His ways, honor Him in perfect obedience as Man, and glorify Him in clearing us from all iniquity, and bringing us to God, to share the inheritance with Him who is Heir of all things.

Another mark of *unity* is found in the truth it sets forth throughout. If early in the Old Testament it is said of man, that "the imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," it is said in the New Testament that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Gen. 6:5; Rom. 8:7). If a prophet in olden time said, "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness hereof is as the flower of the field . . . the grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but *the word of our God shall stand for ever*," an Apostle, seven hundred years after, writes the same, only adding to "the word of the Lord endureth or ever," "And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you" (Isa. 40:6-8; 1 Pet. 1:24, 25). If the Psalmist exclaimed, "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven," our Lord said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Psalms 119:89; Matt. 24:35). If the testimony of a prophet was, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts," an Apostle informs us, that "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (Zech. 4:6; 1 Cor. 2:11). If Moses was inspired to write, "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul," we read in Hebrews, that "without shedding of blood is no remission (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22). If an Old Testament writer warned the people not to "add unto the word" which he commanded them, "neither shall ye diminish ought from it," the ancient writings are not closed without enforcing the exhortation by saying, "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar"; nor can the canon of Scripture be concluded without the last of Revelation giving us the most solemn warning concerning it (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18, 19).

Take another subject. All through the entire Volume, from Genesis to Revelation, we find since man became a sinner, that he has been accounted righteous before God on the principle of faith, and never on the principle of works; a fundamental truth of vital importance. We read, that God clothed Adam and Eve

with coats of skins; that is, their nakedness could only be truly covered up from the eye of God through the benefit derived from the death of a sacrifice. Abel's offering shows out the same. Also in Gen. 15, we read, "Abram believed in Jehovah, and he counted it to him for righteousness"; and David, who lived nine hundred years after, describeth the blessedness of the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. 4:6-8). These Scriptures are quoted by the apostle Paul to make clear to us, that the principle on which all are justified from all things, is that of faith, without the deeds of the law. Hence, "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3:22, 28).

The typical instruction in the Old Testament having its accomplishment in the New Testament, gives a remarkable complexion of *unity* to the whole Bible. Take, for instance, Abraham offering up his loved and only son Isaac; what an accurate fulfilment of the type we have in God's delivering up His only-begotten Son as a sacrifice for us! In this one instance we have shadowed forth *divine love and grace* in laying our iniquity on Him; *divine righteousness* in judging unsparingly our sins on Him instead of on us; and *divine power* to usward in raising Him up from the dead, and giving us risen life in association with Him.

The unity of the Bible is further shown by the one leading Subject throughout, being Christ Jesus, the Son of God, full of brightness and blessing; while the history of man, side by side, tells in all ages the sad tale of his antagonism to God, and unbelief in His goodness and mercy.

Let us look at the dark background of this divinely drawn picture of man's ways, though created in the image of God, whose delights were with the sons of men.

1. Man created upright, and in *innocence*, listened to the lie of Satan, instead of standing firm by the word of the Lord God; he therefore sinned, and thus death came into the world, and death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Gen. 3).

2. From fallen Adam to Moses, man though now *having a conscience*, and knowing good and evil, showed increasingly his departure from God till he actually became a god-maker (Rom. 1:20-23).

3. From Moses to Christ, Israel, though in foolish self-reliance and ignorance, promised to keep the *law*, yet had they the advantage of God's immediate dealings and care, a religious ritual, priesthood, and prophets; but they became such abominable idolaters, and worse than the heathen, that God had to give them unto captivity; and those who returned from the Babylonish captivity, Judah and Benjamin, when their Messiah came received Him not, and openly preferred a known murderer, Barabbas, to Christ.

4. From Christ's death, resurrection, and the preaching of *the Gospel* in the power of the Holy Spirit come down from heaven, sinners are called and saved for eternal glory by Christ Jesus. The effect still is that "few" comparatively believe, and the "many" are going on the broad road to destruction. When

the Lord comes to receive His saints, all who have believed through grace, will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and be taken to the Father's house. But when He comes out of heaven *with His saints*, He tells us that the world will be as it was in the days of Noah, ripe for judgment, and meriting everlasting destruction (1 Cor. 15:23; Matt. 24; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).

5. Christ reigns, and His saints reign with Him. He will "reign in *righteousness*," therefore He must judge first the living, then put down all rule, all authority, and power, and finally at the close of the thousand years, judge the dead, small and great. The effect of our Lord's personal reign as King of Israel, and King over all the earth, will be that *the knowledge* of the Lord will cover the earth "as the waters cover the sea"; but it will be *knowledge* instead of the new birth in many instances, and restraint from Christ's personal reign, so that they will yield "feigned obedience" (Psa. 51:3, margin); the consequence will be, that when Satan, who has been bound during the millennium, is let loose again, myriads will fall away, and fire come down from heaven in judgment upon them (Rev. 20:8, 9).

6. This is followed by "a new heaven and a new earth," in which righteousness dwells. The works of the devil having been destroyed, sin and iniquity completely taken away, and all things made new, righteousness now abides. Before law men were "filled with all unrighteousness"; under law righteousness was demanded in the way of works; by the gospel righteousness is reckoned without works to every one that believeth on Jesus; during Christ's reign He reigns in righteousness; in the eternal state righteousness dwells in heaven and in earth.

But before leaving this dark side of the picture, let us never forget that man has utterly failed in every trial to which he has been subjected, and will do so, more or less, till the new creation order of things is fully established by Him, who said, "Behold I make all things new." Man in innocence, surrounded with every possible privilege and blessing, sinned. The Flood having long after this taken all away in judgment except eight souls, because all flesh had corrupted God's way on the earth, the chief of the spared eight becomes drunk, and through it lasting shame was brought on some of his descendants. Abram called out to trust in God, at the first trial of faith so fails, that he goes down into Egypt for help. The children of Israel, so confident of their own ability, no sooner promised to keep the law, saying, "all the words which Jehovah hath said will we do," than they made an idol of gold, and danced around it, saying, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." When priesthood after this is set up, perhaps the first thing they did was to offer strange fire, which God commanded them not, and there they died before Jehovah. Moses, the man who was specially noted for meekness, could not enter the land because of his rashness in smiting the rock, and calling God's people rebels. The sons of Israel, long after this, wished to have a king, but he soon lost his place because he acted as he thought best, that is, as a rationalist, instead of in obedience to God's word (1 Sam. 15:1-23). David, a man after God's own heart, fell into grievous sin immediately all his enemies had been subdued. After all this, God sent prophets to His people, and the people persecuted, stoned, or slew them. Jehovah sent John the Baptist to the Jews, and first

imprisonment, and then death was his portion. Our Lord came with grace and truth, going about doing good, delivering all that were oppressed, and saving all that came to Him; but they said, "this is the heir; come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours." At last they cry, "Away with him, crucify him." The Holy Ghost came down after Christ's ascension, by whose power the Apostles and others preached the gospel of the grace of God, and from that time to this many resist and few believe. Such is man, and, unless born of God, such he will be, for "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Hence Stephen, in his famous speech before the Sanhedrim, said they were "stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears," and declared them guilty of not having kept the law which they had received, of having persecuted and slain the prophets, of having been the betrayers and murderers of the Just One, and of always resisting the Holy Ghost. And in the coming age, as we have seen, with Satan bound, creation delivered, Israel blessed and enjoying their own land beyond all description, the church in manifested glory over it, Christ Himself ruling and reigning, all persons and things in subjection to Him, even then, when Satan is let loose for a little season, myriads will fall away, and openly dishonor God. Well has it been said, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?"

It is important though to observe the *unity* of thought pervading all Scripture as to man's utter ruin, and incurably bad condition, calling for nothing less than being born anew. If, early in Scripture, we are told that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually," many hundreds of years after another prophet declared, that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"; while hundreds of years later, our Lord said, "from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts," etc., and He did not name anything good in it. Later on an Apostle declared, that "the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7); so that as to man's moral condition in God's sight, ever since the fall, the testimony throughout has been, that "there is none righteous, no not one." The giving of the law, instead of helping or improving those who accepted the yoke, only caused the offence to abound, and gave "the knowledge of sin." Happy are they who so know the Lord Jesus Christ as their life and peace, as to be not under law, and vainly hoping to reach God by doings and efforts, but as brought to God in Christ, and through His precious blood can bow in adoring praise and thanksgiving to Him for the accomplished work of eternal redemption. Such is the uniform testimony of God concerning man throughout the entire volume of inspiration.

The bright line which runs from Genesis to Revelation, and gives the whole Book a *unity* which nothing else could, is its testimony to the infinite glory of the Person of the Son, the eternal efficacy of His one sacrifice for sin, His moral worth and excellency beyond all thought, the glorious offices on our account He now sustains, as well as His glories yet to be revealed when He cometh with clouds, and His saints accompany Him, to put down all that is contrary to God, and fulfil all the promises to Israel, and much more, which assure us of the verity of our Savior's words when speaking of the "Scriptures," "they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

It has been well said, that redemption was no after thought with God -- that God's thoughts and purposes of love were toward us before the foundation of the world. And, in sweet accordance with this, we find the first man, who "was a figure of him that was to come," with his loved and loving help-meet by his side, on awaking from his deep sleep, saying, "This is now bone of my bones."

But by one man *sin* entered into the world, and "by man came *death*"; but no sooner had these enemies been brought into God's creation than we hear of a Redeemer, a suffering Redeemer, too, who should effectually render null all the power of that old serpent, the devil. This Abel believed, and therefore offered a firstling of the flock, and of the fat thereof; and "Jehovah had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Noah's burnt-offerings of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, again in type set forth the sweet savor of the offering of Christ, and the blessings to man and the earth which flow from it to this day. Abram offering up Isaac, as we have seen, prefigures, as no other type does, that "the Father sent the Son, the Savior of the world"; that He would provide a lamb for a burnt-offering. Thus we have in Isaac bound on the altar and afterward loosed from it, a striking type of the death and resurrection of God's only-begotten Son. And as the Holy Spirit makes no mention of Isaac after this, till he comes forth to meet, and embrace his beloved bride, so in the intermediate chapters we have the line of pilgrimage and present circumstances of the man of faith, as well as the father of the typical dead and risen One, calling out a bride for his loved and only son, the heir of all his possessions. God's way of blessing having been set forth by the death and resurrection of Isaac, Sarah dies, type of the Jewish system being broken up, the man of faith is a pilgrim and stranger, can find nothing here to possess but a grave; and though in the world, not of it, not beholden to it, or indebted to it for anything, he obtains a grave for which he pays full price. On the other hand the true sent one is calling out a bride for the dead, risen, and now hidden son, by whose testimony she is separated in heart unto him, whom she has not seen but loves; and the first glance she has of him detaches her from everything here, and she hides herself under her veil. Absorbed with the object of her heart, self was lost sight of, in the consummation of her longing desire to "see his face."

And so we might trace in Joseph again the dead and risen Christ in relation to Israel. While in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, as well as Deuteronomy, types and shadows abound in the various sacrifices offered of the infinite value and various aspects of that one offering of the body of Christ, offered once for all, never to be repeated; "for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). In so many ways, and by such various types, the sufferings and death of our adorable Savior are set before us in many parts of the sacred writings, that we can now go from the New Testament statements of facts to learn details in the records of the Old Testament types and prophecies.

Not only did God declare that our Redeemer should be the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, and the Fruit of David's loins, as concerning the flesh, but that He should be the virgin's Child, and yet His name be Immanuel, God with

us. It may be frequently noticed in Scripture, that when the Savior's perfect Humanity is brought before us, His Deity is also mentioned not far off. Again, we are told that Bethlehem would be the place of the Savior's birth; and there it is added, "whose goings forth have been of old from everlasting," words which can only apply to Deity. Prophets had long before declared, that He would grow up before Jehovah as a tender plant, be a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, be despised and rejected of men who were so blind that they saw no beauty in Him that they might desire Him, so that in astonishment the prophet could add, "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" Not only His spotless and unblemished life, in suffering, temptation, and sorrow occupied the prophetic page, but the cross in all its unutterable woe was again and again set forth. If one spake of Him as wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, and to put Him to grief as having our iniquities laid upon Him, another was able to foretell the details of those sorrows some hundreds of years before they occurred, and that His cry at that moment under desertion would be, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The actual death of the cross had been predicted as having His hands and His feet "pierced." The derision and mockery, and cruel scourging of men, and His heel under the bruising of Satan, were not forgotten. His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, the scattering of the sheep when the Shepherd was smitten, the rejection of the "Stone" which was to be the Head of the corner were not omitted by the prophetic pen. That the soldiers should part His garments among them, and for His coat cast lots, that He should occupy in death a rich man's grave, that He would be numbered with the transgressors, bear the sins of many, pray for the wicked murderers, and His soul be made an offering for sin, that a bone of Him should not be broken, but that they should look upon Him whom they "pierced," we have only to look into the New Testament to find every jot and tittle of it literally fulfilled. That He died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, was what Paul declared in the gospel that he preached (1 Cor. 15:3, 4); and Peter also owning Him as "Lord of all," and coming to judge the living and the dead, delighted to add, "to him give all the prophets witness that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). If in almost the beginning of the sacred Volume the blood of the firstling of the flock was shed, as the only way of sinful man approaching God, at nearly the end we find it is blessedly recorded, "Unto him that loveth us, and hath washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen." Is it possible, we may well ask, that anything can more clearly demonstrate the unity of the Bible than the discovery, that the one grand absorbing and paramount subject throughout, is Jesus the Son of God, who is Lord of all, and the Savior of sinners that believe?

We must not however forget, that with all the similarities there are very striking contrasts. No two systems could be more distinct and separate than Judaism and Christianity, or law and grace. As to the former, the law said, Do and live; the gospel says, Believe and live; the law said, Thou shalt love God and

your neighbor, or be cursed; the gospel says, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life." With regard to Judaism, the three things which characterized it were,

- (1), a place of worship on earth;
 - (2), an earthly order of priesthood between God and the people;
 - (3), all the people at a distance from God-outside the veil; but Christianity, in virtue of the accomplished work of Jesus, is characterized in Scripture,
- (1), by access to God with confidence inside the rent veil;
 - (2), worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth; and
 - (3), a heavenly order of priesthood -- Christ the High Priest and all believers priests. Any other order of priesthood is subversive of Christianity, and why? Because the believer's standing is always in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and the Holy Spirit has come down to indwell and abide with us for ever.

Another thing that marks the unity of the Bible is the remarkable way in which its various parts are adapted and interwoven with each other, so that not one of the smallest books of it could be taken from us without serious loss. Perhaps some one would be ready to say, "It would be no loss to miss the book of Esther, for neither God nor Lord is once named in it." Such, however, have little considered that the omissions of Scripture often show their beauty and perfection. It is so in this and other cases. When many of God's people returned from the Babylonish captivity, there were some who, though they had the thoughts and feelings of His people, yet did not act in faith in returning to the land God had given them; such God never forsakes, though He does not openly show Himself to them. He always cares for His own, however weak and fallen they may be. This the book of Esther remarkably illustrates, and it is a point of all importance in the ways of God.

Others may say, Could we not part with the book of Proverbs or of Ecclesiastes without loss? Certainly not. In Prov. 8 we have one of the finest descriptions given of Christ as "wisdom" found in Scripture; and in other parts many of His actings and wise counsels, besides His kingly power and Sonship. And by losing Ecclesiastes we should be deprived not only of the experience of one who had had it in his power to try everything of earthly blessing to secure happiness, yet found it all to be vanity and vexation of spirit, and everything stamped with death; but we should lose the comfort given us of two things "under the sun" which are not vanity; one seemed "great" to him this was the deliverance and salvation wrought out on Calvary, alluded to at the end of ch. 9; the other is the service of Christ -- "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days" (Eccl. 9:13-15; 11:1). These things also show that the sacred writings are so adapted to each other, so fitted together and interwoven, that the more they are pondered the more the unity of the Bible becomes apparent. To lose any part of what we now possess would be like missing some links of a golden chain, and could not fail to produce a gap or defect.

Before closing this part of our subject, there is another character of unity seen amidst all the infinite variety of the Holy Scriptures. We sometimes find the prophets, though unknown to each other, and without any intercourse, going on from the points where others ended, though almost all the prophets went on to the reign of Messiah. Look, for instance, at Isaiah, though he saw terrible failure in Judah and Jerusalem, and even touched on the Jews' rejection of Christ coming in humiliation, yet he does not speak of their captivity; whereas Jeremiah, about a hundred years after, not only enters much into their being given into captivity, but declares it will be for seventy years. Daniel, after this, finds out from Jeremiah's books, that the captivity will be for seventy years, and goes on not only to give a prophetic sketch of the times of the Gentiles, but he also speaks of his own people in the famous prophecy of the seventy weeks. Hosea tells us of their present state and its continuance until the children of Israel return to seek Jehovah (Hos. 3:4, 5). The post-captivity prophets give us an appalling description of their moral condition, without hope, except in a few who fear Jehovah, till the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. The prophecy in Malachi of John's preceding the Lord coming in grace, and of Elijah preceding the Lord coming in power and glory, were both referred to by our Lord, thus connecting the Old and New Testaments, between which there is a period of more than four hundred years. Nearly a thousand references are made in the New Testament to the Old; and a multitude of prophetic Scriptures in the Old have the records of their fulfilment in the New. It need scarcely be added, that the so-called Apocrypha is nowhere quoted in the New Testament, nor does it commend itself to a spiritual mind as inspired. It is doubtless correctly refused as such.

The same *unity* of purpose and links of connection are seen in the New Testament. If Matthew closes with showing Christ risen and on the earth, Mark goes on to tell us of His ascension, and sitting on the right hand of God. Luke tells us not only that they saw Him go up into heaven out of their sight, but the disciples were told to wait for power from on high—the coming of the Holy Spirit; while John's gospel goes on still further, for there Christ not only speaks of new relationships, His ascension, His breathing on His disciples the Holy Spirit -- risen life -- but hints at His coming again, saying, "If I will that he tarry till I come." In speaking to Thomas He refers to the Jewish remnant being blessed on *seeing* Him after we are gone; and the last chapter gives us a millennial scene.

So in the epistles. Peter looks at us as "pilgrims and strangers," going on to the inheritance "reserved in heaven" for us; but under divine keeping all along the path, with trials and difficulties by the way, Paul, however, usually begins with us as in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and bids us walk here on earth as those who are heavenly, with all our resources in the glorified Son of God, and keeps His blessed coming before us as our hope. John goes on from the rapture at our Lord's coming, sees us in heaven during the apocalyptic judgments of seals, trumpets, and vials; then, after the judgment of the great whore, the marriage supper, we come out of heaven with Christ in manifested glory to judge the quick and the dead, to establish His rightful place and kingdom on earth, and subdue all for

God's glory. It is impossible, then, not to be struck with the element of unity amidst all the almost endless variety of the contents of the Bible, and to see that one mind, and that divine, even the Holy Spirit, must have indited it.

14. The Bible -- Its Perfection

The Bible must be perfect. Being God's words they could not be otherwise, for all His works, whether in creation or redemption, bear the stamp of being perfect. "The law [or doctrine] of Jehovah is *perfect* converting the soul"; and "His way is *perfect*" (Psa. 18:30; 19:7). Again we read, "The words of Jehovah are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times," and that "Every word of God is pure" (Psa. 12:6; Prov. 30:5). The Bible must be perfect, because, as we hope we have fully proved, it emanates from God.

It is also perfect in being able not only to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus, but because it is sufficient to furnish the believer completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:15-17).

The holy Scriptures are *infinite* too in their quality because divinely perfect. Take up another book, and you may soon master most of its contents, but the written word who can grasp? If an inspired Apostle had to say, "We know in part, and we prophesy in part," we can surely add, "that the little we know we know very imperfectly." Who can say he has fully learned the divinely-given ministry of any part of Scripture? And why? Because being God's word it is infinite in its height, and depth, and length, and breadth. We do well to remember this; and that because we are finite creatures we can know only in part, and give out to others but in part.

Few things show more the divine perfection stamped upon the Bible than its infallible accuracy as to what has been already fulfilled. Let us look at a few instances. More than four thousand years ago, Jehovah said, "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22); and do they not continue to this day?

Again we read, that Abram's *seed* (therefore reckoned from Isaac's birth) should be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, etc., for "four hundred years" -- which would be consequently four hundred and thirty years after the promise made to Abram; hence we read, "It came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of Jehovah went out from the land of Egypt" (Gen. 15:13; Ex. 12:41; Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:16, 17).

Again, in the time of Jeroboam's abominations, a man of God came unto Bethel by the *word of Jehovah*, and cried, saying,

O altar, altar, thus saith Jehovah; Behold a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee. And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which Jehovah hath spoken; Behold the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. And it came to pass when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel,

that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand which he put forth against him dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given *by the word of Jehovah*. And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Entreat now the face of Jehovah thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought Jehovah, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before (1 Kings 13:1-6).

Now look at the accurate fulfilment of this saying of the man of God about three hundred years after. We read of King Josiah,

Moreover, the altar that was at Bethel, and the high place which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove. And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchers that were there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchers, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of Jehovah, which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words. Then he said, What title is that that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulcher of the man of God which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel (2 Kings 23:15-17).

Were words ever more solemnly and more accurately fulfilled? How little men think they are refusing God's word, and dishonoring His holy name when they speak of their opinions of the Scriptures, instead of bowing implicitly to their authority and instruction!

In reference also to God's dealings with some of the ancient cities recorded in Scripture, we have the most accurate and solemn fulfilment. Look, for instance, at one of the finest cities the world ever knew, and one which existed very early after the Deluge -- Nineveh. We know from the book of Jonah that it was "a very great city." Historians tell us that it extended in length about eighteen miles, and was surrounded with a wall more than a hundred feet high, wide enough to drive three chariots abreast, and ornamented with fifteen hundred towers. The breadth of the city was about twelve miles. Hence Jonah speaks of it as an exceeding great city of three days' journey; and if the "six score thousand persons in it, who could not discern between their right hand and their left," refer to young children, the population of the city must have been very large. The "much cattle" also intimates that there were fields, or parks and palaces, within the enclosure of its high and massive wall; and its ruins show there must have been extensive and magnificent buildings in it. The modern excavations prove the magnificence of the past and fallen greatness of Nineveh. With all her worldly and royal splendor Jehovah said, "I will make thy grave, for thou art vile . . . Nineveh is laid waste, who will bemoan her . . . her young children were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets; and they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains" (Nahum 1 and 3). Another prophet said, He

will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations; both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the

windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work. This is the rejoicing city, that dwelt carelessly; that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me; how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! Every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand" (Zeph. 2:13-15).

It is said that the whole surface of the country is now covered with fragments of bricks and pottery. Not only is it "desolate," but it has long appeared a huge misshapen mound, like a large grave, covered with rank vegetation, and a place for beasts to lie down in; so literally has the prophetic word been fulfilled. It is probable that Nineveh was built soon after the confusion of tongues.

Let our thoughts now turn for a moment toward another ancient city -- Tyre. It was a maritime city, and its prosperity, riches, pride, and costliness have been abundantly described by the prophet Ezekiel; and Zechariah has also spoken of the awful doom that then awaited it from the hand of God. Hiram, king of Tyre, was well known in David's and Solomon's days, for from him they obtained much of the material for their buildings at Jerusalem. From all accounts, Tyre was a large and magnificent city, with a profusion of wealth, and all its usual accompaniments of vice and ungodliness; and it is said to have had all the chief merchandise of India and other countries. So elegant was the city in her own esteem, that the inspired penman describes her as saying, "I am of perfect beauty," and adds,

All thy men of war that are in thee; and all thy company, which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin . . . what city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? . . . The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and *never shalt be any more* . . . By thy great wisdom, and by thy traffic, hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches. Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; behold, therefore, I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness . . . They shall bring thee down to the pit, acid thou shalt die the deaths of them *that are slain in the midst of the seas* (Ezek. 27:3, 27, 32, 36; 28:5, 8).

Another prophet describes this city, saying,

Tyrus did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire (Zech. 9:3, 4).

Referring to her fall and terrible doom, Ezekiel further said,

Thus saith the Lord God to Tyrus . . . at the sound of thy fall . . . the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their brodered garments; they shall clothe themselves with trembling; they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee. And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed that wast inhabited of seafaring men, the renowned city, which was strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror to be on all that haunt it! . . . Thus saith the Lord God, When I shall make thee *a desolate city*, like the cities that are not inhabited . . . I will make thee a terror, and *thou shalt be no more*, though thou

be sought for, yet *shall thou never be found again.*” And in the beginning of the same chapter we read, “Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers; I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be *a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea*; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God (Ezek. 26).

From modern travelers we learn how truly literal has been the accomplishment of these most solemn prophetic utterances. They have described the town as “environed by rocks, on the ledges of which are scattered the fragments of ancient columns.” They have expressed their conviction, that *the waves of the sea* now roll where once stood the vast and magnificent palaces of Tyrian wealth and luxury; and that the monuments of commercial enterprise and prosperity have been overwhelmed by the storm of divine indignation, and are as if they had never been. Another traveler says, he found it “a mere Babel of broken walls, pillars, vaults, etc., there being not so much as one entire house left! Its present inhabitants are only a few poor wretches harboring themselves in the vaults, and subsisting chiefly by fishing; who seem to be preserved in the place by divine Providence, as a visible argument how God has fulfilled His word concerning Tyre, namely, that it should be “like the top of a rock; thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon.” To this hour all has been accomplished according to the word of the Lord God, and as to the future, He has declared, “*thou shalt be built no more*” (Ezek. 26:14). We cannot forbear quoting also a few sentences of a Mr. Hardy on this solemn matter. He says, speaking of the scenes of joyousness and of wealth that have been exhibited on these shores, “They have passed away, like the feverish dream of a disturbed sleep. Ships may be seen at a distance; no merchant of the earth ever enters the name of Tyre upon his books; and where thousands once assembled in pomp and pride, I could discover only a few children and a party of Turks. It was impossible,” says the writer, “not to think of another people, still more favored in their privileges, and whose commercial transactions are as extended as the world. Cities of my country! shall it ever be said of you, that ye are no more? The patriot may sing exultingly over his cups the praises of Britannia, ruler of the waves; but the Christian will fear and tremble, and offer up prayer to God, that what we deserve in *justice* may be withheld from us in *mercy*.”

Babylon was another ancient city, and unsurpassed for its beauty and magnificence. It has been described as “a square of about fifteen miles on each side.” The reader will remember that ambassadors were sent from it to Hezekiah to honor him on his recovery from sickness. The wall surrounding the city is said to have been three hundred and fifty feet high, and eighty-seven feet thick.” The city was surrounded, too, with a very capacious ditch, which was kept full by the river Euphrates; so that it seemed with all this, and its many towers and gates of brass, to be quite impregnable; and so it was in man’s account; but when God speaks all things are possible to Him, and this many men do not think of. Its palaces, hanging gardens, and wealth showed a profusion of luxury and of human achievement far beyond anything that has been known since. But pride and idolatry, and vice, after long patience, with its gross immoralities and idol

worship, notwithstanding the testimony of Daniel and his associates, called for God’s judicial interference. The testimony of an inspired prophet was,

And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. *It shall never be inhabited*, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there: but wild beasts of the desert shall lie there, and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces . . . For I will rise up against them, saith Jehovah of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name, and remnant, and son, and nephew, saith Jehovah. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water; and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith Jehovah of hosts. Jehovah of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand (Isa. 13:19-22; 14:22, 24).

Where is now this magnificent city, the glory of kingdoms? Have its infidel maxims stood, or has God’s word been fulfilled? Alas! alas! travelers tell us it is a mass of dust and barrenness, with heaps of bricks and broken pillars, instead of, as it once was, the fruitful valley of Shinar. So full is it of venomous creatures that no one is safe to approach it within a mile and a half, except for about two months in the year, when these animals never leave their holes.

What appalling facts are these we have thus far noticed in the history of some of the greatest cities that ever existed in the world, and how truly has the word of Jehovah been fulfilled! Well is it for those who so believe God’s testimony as to tremble at His word!

But before leaving these examples of the predictions of the Bible, there is another city with which we are rather more familiar, which calls for a few remarks: we mean Jerusalem. A later prophet said, “Jerusalem shall become heaps” (Mic. 3:12); and does not this agree with every description we have of its state ever since its destruction by Titus? Are not our Lord’s words also truly fulfilled, “Behold your house is left unto you desolate”? Are not the stones of the temple so scattered, that there is not one stone upon another which has not been thrown down? Is not Jerusalem still trodden down of the Gentiles? Is it not well known that Arab boys break off pieces of stone from the heaps of scattered materials of the ancient temple to obtain a small gratuity from her visitors? And are we not assured that the treading down of the holy city by the uncircumcised will go on “till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled”? How surpassingly solemn then is the word of God, and how earnestly it admonishes us to adopt the motto of a less favored and far less instructed servant of God in a past age, “Believe in Jehovah your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper!” This subject -- “the times of the Gentiles” -- now calls for a few remarks as a further and very striking example of the accurate fulfilment of the word of God by the prophet.

When the last two tribes of Israel were delivered by Jehovah into captivity to the king of Babylon, the sword of God’s rule in the earth was handed over to Nebuchadnezzar, so that “whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and created

things were also given unto his hands. The prophet said to him, "Thou art this head of gold" -- the power derived in its purest state. The whole course of "the times of the Gentiles" was revealed to Daniel by Jehovah, and made known to the king, extending from that moment till the Lord will be revealed from heaven to judge, as "the stone cut out without hands." As our space only admits of a brief glance at this Gentile image as another example of the perfection of Scripture, let it be especially noticed that it consisted of four empires, and is to terminate in ten kingdoms. It has been the ambition of some to have a fifth monarchy; and if it be true that the first Napoleon led an immense army into Russia with this view, it was painfully proved that God's mind is four empires among Gentiles and not five, and they have all long since been and gone. The head of gold -- the Babylonian. The next inferior to this -- the Medo-Persian of silver; then the Grecian, of brass; then the Roman strong as iron; then the feet and toes of the image, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, with which there can be no union, strikingly showing the political conservative and radical elements so manifest unto this day. It is remarkable also, that when the ten toes, or ten kingdoms, are fully developed, then judgment falls upon it. And it is most solemnly true, that for many years past most of the political changes that have taken place on the continent in that part of Europe comprehended in Nebuchadnezzar's image, have more and more developed these ten kingdoms (Dan. 2).

We refer to this not merely to show how accurately Scripture has been fulfilled, and is still being fulfilled as to the Gentile kingdoms, but because of our Lord's words, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." For when the Lord comes out of heaven with His saints in manifested glory, and every eye shall see Him, and they also who pierced Him, then He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob, be their Savior and Deliverer, and establish them in their own land as their rightful King, and "the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings." The Lord's promised blessings to Israel will be accompanied with judgment; but when His saints are taken to heavenly glory, to the Father's house, the translation will be all of divine grace and to them power and blessing without judgment.

In nothing, perhaps, is the perfect accuracy of Scripture more manifest than in the present state of the children of Israel; not but that the word of Jehovah as to the Gentile nations is also very solemnly being fulfilled -- "I will overturn, overturn, overturn it; and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is" (Ezek. 21:27). But as to Israel, the ten tribes are scattered to the four winds "outcasts," no man knows where; a few of them were not carried away in the Assyrian captivity, and that is why we read of Anna, who was of the tribe of Asher, and now and then we meet with one of the remnant of these ten tribes which were left behind (see 2 Chron. 34:9). But most of the Israelites with whom we have intercourse are of Judah and Benjamin. This distinction is kept up in the prophets, and is important; for our Lord taught, that the ten tribes would not be gathered till He appears in manifested glory. Isaiah remarkably distinguishes them by speaking of the "outcasts of Israel," and of the "dispersed of Judah," instead of preserving their own nationality. But though one here and there repents, receives Christ as his Savior, and openly confesses Him, and is really

born anew and saved, "according to the election of grace," as the Apostle tells us, yet, as a people, they are still in unbelief; some are pious Jews, and others openly infidel, yet at this moment fulfilling the words of the prophet Hosea,

The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image [or pillar, margin], and without an ephod, and without teraphim.

Thus it is to this day, though they have much of the wealth of the world, the word of God must be fulfilled, for it endures forever; so the Jews have no king, no prince, no proper sacrifice, no pillar, no high priest with ephod, and no teraphim or idol. How appalling are these facts, and how the eternal verity of the written word should be endeared to our hearts! It is a serious blunder to suppose that the Jews, as a people, are to be converted by the present ministry of the gospel, for both Old and New Testaments assure us, that it will be by *seeing* their Savior, and not like us by believing in One whom we have not seen, but for whom we look and wait. Hence Hosea goes on to say, "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king, and shall fear Jehovah and his goodness in the latter days" (Hos. 3:4, 5). Nothing is more plainly stated in Scripture than Israel's future blessing, and that by the Lord's personal coming. The prophet Isaiah said, "The Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith Jehovah" (Isa. 59:20); and an Apostle taught that, "all Israel [*i.e.*, all the twelve tribes] shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Rom. 11:26, 27).

The faithfulness of God to His own word in all these ways is very precious to our souls. A story is published of two Rabbis approaching Jerusalem, who observed a fox running on the hill of Zion, when Rabbi Joshua wept, and Rabbi Eliezer laughed. "Wherefore dost thou laugh?" said he who wept. "Nay, wherefore dost thou weep?" demanded Eliezer. "I weep," replied the Rabbi Joshua, "because I see what is written in the Lamentations fulfilled, 'because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it' (Lam. 5:18)." "And therefore," said Rabbi Eliezer, "do I laugh, for when I see with mine own eyes that God has fulfilled His *threatenings* to the very letter, I have thereby a pledge that not one of His *promises* shall fail, for He is ever more ready to show *mercy* than *judgment*."

In nothing, however, is the perfection of the Scriptures more strikingly seen than in the use of the divine titles. As we have before noticed, God's creatorial title is simply God -- Elohim; but when man and God's relationship to him are brought in, it is then Lord God, or Jehovah-Elohim. Afterward when Abraham is called out from idolatry to trust God, He then is revealed to him as "the Almighty God" (Gen. 17:1). It is also to be remarked, that in the brief account of king Melchisedec he is also spoken of as priest of the Most High God -- king and priest; and he was as we learn from Heb. 7, eminently typical of the Lord Jesus in a future day, when He will "be a priest upon his throne"; and there God is spoken of as "the Most High God," and also that He is "possessor of heaven and earth." These titles will be asserted by our Lord in the millennial age, when He comes forth wearing His many crowns, and reigns in

power and great glory (Gen. 14:18-22).

When God has a people on earth, He is made known as Jehovah, or I AM; and when they are redeemed out of Egypt, He dwells among them, and maintains covenant relationship with them as Jehovah. This goes on as long as He can own them as His people, and when He can no longer say of them, "my people," even then, instead of utterly giving them up, Jesus is born into the world to "save his people from their sins." He is called Jesus, or Jehovah Savior. He is spoken of in Scripture as that Holy Thing born of Mary, Son of God, Son of man, Son of the Highest, the Christ, Messiah or Anointed, the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, Jesus Christ, the Word, Lamb of God, King of Israel, etc., and each title is used with the most perfect accuracy and point. Take a few examples. Stephen full of the Holy Spirit looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and *Jesus* standing on the right hand of God; and why did he say that he saw Jesus? Why not use another of His many titles? Because Jesus is His name as incarnate, and Stephen's special comfort when suffering for His truth was the contemplation of Him as Man, who after suffering for the truth unto death was now on the throne of God. His confession therefore was, "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the *Son of man* standing on the right hand of God." Though the faithful martyr beholds Him as glorified Man, yet he also observed, that he bows to Him there as "Lord of all," and says, "*Lord Jesus*, receive my spirit!" and again, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep" (Acts 7:55-60). All true believers bow to Jesus as Lord.

Again, when an alarmed and sin-convicted man cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" Paul's reply was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house"; but why does he here repeat all these titles of the Savior? Because he is presenting Him to this anxious soul as the Object of faith, and in such a way as to *fully* satisfy his awakened conscience. Jesus is not only Son of man in the glory, but has been there made "both Lord, and Christ" (Acts 2:36). If the question of the troubled heart be, Is He *willing* to save me? The answer is, Yes; He is JESUS, and came into the world for the very purpose of saving sinners. If the inquiry be, Is He *able* to save me? The answer is, Yes; He is "LORD of all," and has all power in heaven and in earth; and His being the CHRIST, the anointed One in heaven, consequent upon His finished work on the cross, is the unquestionable proof that every one that has come as a sinner to Him the Savior, is forgiven and blessed. How perfectly accurate, therefore, was the Apostle's reply, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

Again, when the same apostle is writing about the Lord's coming, he says, "We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"; because he is then contemplating Him not in humiliation but in power, that power as Lord of all, by which "he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," and yet Savior even to the changing and saving of our body.

Look at another instance, when saving faith is referred to. It is said, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus" -- not simply Jesus, for many speak of Him as such who never savingly know Him, but *Lord Jesus* -- the Son man in the glory in whom dwells "the fulness of the Godhead bodily," and who is "Head of all principality and power," -- "and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be

saved." Could anything be more precise and pointed in the use of titles?

It is well known that the book of Psalms consists of five divisions, or books. The Hebrew Bible is so arranged; and it is very striking to see how remarkably the titles of God are used in them. Look, for instance, at the first and second books. The first book consists of Psalms 1 to Psalm 41, and the second book from Psalm 42 to the end of Psalm 72.¹ In the first book the prevailing title by far is Jehovah, because the godly Jews are looked at as in Jerusalem, and still in association with the temple; whereas in the second book the title most commonly used is not Jehovah, but God. And why? Because the remnant of Jews are looked at there as having fled from Jerusalem, in fulfilment of our Lord's words, "Then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains," and their covenant relationship with Jehovah is little realized by them. Far away from their beloved city and temple, in the hill Mizar, they feel cast down, as if God had forgotten them. Take a Psalm in the first book, say Psalm 34, and *Jehovah* is mentioned sixteen times; and in a Psalm in the second book, say Psalm 41 or Psalm 42, and we find *God* used nearly as many times as there are verses. The accuracy is most striking.

The precision and depth of meaning with which the divine titles are used all through Scripture is very manifest. If in Proverbs we have Jehovah, is it not because those addressed are looked at in relationship with Him? If in Ecclesiastes we have God, is it not because it is for the most part man seeking on earth an object for his heart, and finds vanity and vexation of spirit? And if in the Song of Solomon we have neither, is it not because the heart has there found a satisfying Object? No doubt in its primary application it is Jewish, but who among the children of God has not delighted in our Lord Jesus Christ as the "altogether lovely," and rejoiced at realizing that He has brought us into His banqueting house, and that His banner over us is love? By the Spirit we are able, while

"Gazing on the Lord in glory,"

to sing, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine," and can surely add, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet unto my taste."

We have already observed how minutely and accurately the Scripture has been fulfilled as to the birth, life, sufferings, atoning death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord Jesus

1. The third book embraces Psalms 72 to 89; the fourth book 90. to 106; and the fifth book 107 to 150. The subject of each book is remarkable, as well as the ending of them. We must, however, never forget when pondering these precious portions of divine truth, that David is spoken of as the "sweet psalmist of Israel," and not as the psalmist of the church. We do not find, therefore, in these sacred writings the believer's present relationship to God as his Father, or of His being indwelt and united to Christ by the Holy Ghost. The believer is looked at in bondage more or less, and not inside the veil, where we can be with boldness through the blood of Jesus. The piety and trust in God, with confidence in time of trouble, in the Psalms, have always been most encouraging to the faithful. But redemption accomplished, the Holy Spirit given because Jesus has been glorified, and the formation of the church, or assembly, by uniting all believers on earth to Christ the Head in heaven in "one body" by "one Spirit"; and every believer a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus -- are precious truths which for obvious reasons we do not find in the Psalms.

Christ; and we may be assured that not one jot or tittle shall fail of all that is written concerning His coming for His saints, His glorious appearing, judgments and reign. Few things have so obscured the simplicity of the truth, or been more misleading than the traditions that there will be one general resurrection, and a general judgment, till which no one can have the assurance of his eternal safety. The reception of such doctrines, which are unknown in Scripture, can only be accounted for by persons going to the Reformation as the source of orthodoxy, instead of to the word of God, to that which was at the beginning, and has been treasured up for us in the inspired writings. As to the Reformation we have much to thank God for in the wonderful recovery of the grand foundation truth of justification by faith, and the diffusion of copies of the Bible for general reading; but with these and other blessings, a mass of doctrines were received from Papists, which are held by many Protestants to this day; and among them that the church will convert the world, that Christianity will triumph over infidelity and every opposing power. That a time will come when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," is unquestionable, as we have seen; but in the same chapter we are told it is to be brought about by Christ reigning in "righteousness," and not therefore by the preaching of the "gospel of the grace of God" (Isa. 11). From Scripture we learn that Christ is "heir of all things," that, as the glorified Man, all things are to be put under His feet, and that all judgment is committed unto Him because He is the Son of man. His rightful place also, as having died for all, and triumphed over death and Satan is, that to Him every knee should bow, in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. How is it possible that these things can be otherwise than strictly and accurately fulfilled by His power, whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself! It is, we repeat, God's unfailing faithfulness to His own word that comforts our hearts and strengthens our confidence in Himself, for "He is faithful that promised: he cannot deny himself." Was He ever truer to the soul that seeketh Him than now? Was it ever a greater reality to souls than now, that,

Where two or three are gathered together in my name,
there am I in the midst of them"? (Matt. 18:20).

Is it not to thousands in these days as real to their hearts as if they saw Him in the midst? Oh the untold blessedness of having to do with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, receiving His testimony, and setting to our seal that God is true

Our gracious God having caused His word to be written for our instruction, how could we expect it otherwise than its being accurately fulfilled according to His own will? Nor is it surprising, because it is His word, the revelation of His own mind, that both Old and New Testaments give a note of most solemn warning to any who add to it or take from it (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18, 19). Nothing surely could more truly authenticate the sacred writings, or more thoroughly show the infinite perfection of the Bible.

"What Christ hath said must be fulfilled;

On this firm rock believers build;
His word shall stand, His truth prevail,
And not one jot nor tittle fail."

15. The Bible -- Its Blessedness

It is impossible to tell out in human language the full blessedness of having the holy Scriptures. But what is most striking in it is the revelation it gives us of God, so that we now know Him not only as Creator, and One who is kind to the unthankful and the unholy in providing for His creatures (for "his tender mercies are over all his works"), but we also know Him in the exceeding riches of His grace as a Savior-God, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Having received "the words of God," and "the Spirit of God," we know that we are brought to God, and are "in the light as he is in the light." Precious grace! It is not merely that we have title to glory through the blood of the cross, but we are brought to God who is "light" and "love" in Christ, who is our Life, Righteousness, and Peace.

Before the death of Christ, God was not so revealed. Till Jesus the Son of God came, God was hid behind a veil, and little known except by His *acts*; then Christ revealed the Father, and made Himself known as the Son, and on leaving promised to send the Holy Spirit to abide with us for ever. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The Son, the effulgence of His glory, has fully manifested God in-flesh. We have the Father so perfectly represented in the Son, that He could say, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also . . . he that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; and He declares that His rejectors were guilty, and had no cloak for their sin, because as He said, "Ye have "both seen and hated both me and my Father" (John 1:18; 14:7, 9; 15:24).

Though God had been so far made known in Old Testament times, that He visited Adam and Abraham, and dwelt among His redeemed earthly people; yet it was not till the Savior's baptism that God, in the plurality of Persons -- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- was made known. THE SPIRIT came down as a dove, and abode on the spotless One, and the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," manifested also the personal glories of the FATHER and the SON. From that time the unfathomable blessedness of knowing God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- one God -- abounds in holy Scripture; and the believing knowledge of redemption, through grace, according to divine counsel and eternal purpose, has brought us into conscious relationship with God as our Father, with the Son as our eternal life, and the Spirit given to guide us into all the truth, to strengthen us with might in the inner man, and also as the Anointing, Seal, and Earnest of our inheritance.

It is because the Scriptures give us God's revelation of Himself, and of His mind and will, and so constantly testify of Christ, that by the teaching and ministry of the Holy Spirit, they are the food of our souls. And here observe, it is not our own thoughts about Scripture, or our reasonings about it, or opinions of it, or deductions from it, but what God says. "It is

written," was the word so often uttered by our adorable Savior and His apostles; and we may be assured that we can only "resist" Satan by being "steadfast in the faith." And what is this, but believably holding and using Scripture as the word of God? How else could we be steadfast in the faith?

Again, we see the untold blessedness of the Scriptures in giving us divine intelligence as to ourselves, our state, our path, our circumstances, and everything around us, as to Jews, Gentiles, and church of God. They open up to us the past, present, and future; things heavenly and earthly, things temporal and eternal, the two Adams and all in connection with them as heads of races; and the curtain is so drawn now and then, that the Spirit-led soul can survey the coming glories and their felicity, and also solemnly contemplate the infernal regions of unending misery and punishment.

In the Old Testament, we have the sons of Israel, a people God called out to Himself; also the Gentiles, with promise that God's blessing should even reach out to them -- that in Christ, the Seed, *all nations* should be blessed. But the church, the body of Christ, was not revealed there. The prophets went from "the sufferings of Christ" to "the glories which should follow," and entirely passed over the marvelous work of forming and removing the church to her destined heavenly glory, before the Lord comes out in blessing to His ancient people, and judgment of the quick and the dead at His appearing and kingdom. Typical intimations and shadows there were now and then of Christ and the church as in Adam and Eve, Isaac and Rebecca, Joseph and Asenath, Moses and his wife; but the assembly as "the body of Christ" on earth, united to Christ the Head in heaven, and formed into one body by the gift of the Holy Spirit, was not *revealed* ² till Paul was called by divine grace. Eph. 3 plainly shows this, and that the mystery of the church was "hid in God." "not made known," "kept secret since the world began." (See also Rom. 16:25, 26; for "Scriptures of the prophets" read "prophetic Scriptures.")

Believers are now, by the Holy Spirit, in union with Christ ascended; for "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." All this most blessed workmanship of the Holy Spirit, His present ministry through gifts bestowed by Christ ascended, all the affection and care of Christ for His assembly, and the perfection of the Father's love to His children, loving them as He loved His Son, are richly and blessedly brought to us through the apostolic writings, and especially by those of Paul, who was emphatically a minister of the church or assembly (Col. 1:23). This, therefore, gives them a sacred charm to the believer, and through faith they necessarily produce a walk of separation and devotedness to the Lord.

The Scriptures give us divine intelligence about everything necessary to completely furnish the believer unto every good work. Do I inquire what God's present ways on *earth* for blessing are? I learn from His word that He is calling out and forming a bride for His own Son, whose heart is set upon her as His own body, and who "nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church"; and that this will go on till we hear the

"shout," and are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so are "for ever with the Lord." Do we inquire as to the Jews? We still find the "outcasts" of Israel -- the ten tribes are cast out, no man knows where; and the two tribes are still "dispersed" among the nations, fulfilling the Scriptures of the prophets as to their state; and one now and then believing the gospel, and forming part of God's assembly. If a question be asked about the European nations, which once formed part of the Roman empire? According to the word of God by Daniel, we learn that all is going on to the development of the ten kingdoms before divine judgment falls upon them. Does any one inquire whether Scripture tells us anything about Protestantism? Most surely; it is referred to in the epistle to the church at Sardis, and is described as having a name to live and being dead. Protesting against error may be with those who are quite devoid of faith in God's revealed truth concerning His Son, and therefore such have not life -- "He that hath not the Son of God hath *not life*" (1 John 5:12). And it would be impossible that such a huge system as Popery, established on the earth for so many centuries, should be omitted in God's word written for our instruction; we find, therefore, much in Scripture concerning it, and what is so striking, it stands in the end of this age in rival antagonism with infidelity; and it needs but little spiritual discernment to see how rapidly this ill-feeling and fear of each other is growing. Nevertheless, as before observed, the result must be that the infidel power will be too strong for the Papal power, and will spoil and destroy this unchaste woman (Rev. 17:16, 17; 18:8). The great whore may include all in Christendom who are untrue in affection to the Lord Himself. Thank God, not one child of His can be lost, and He knoweth them that trust in Him.

With regard to the church or assembly of God in the true sense, (which is doubtless the most blessed testimony that ever emanated from God, and the workmanship of the Holy Spirit, it must abide for ever, because each true believer is by one Spirit united to Christ in ascension as a member of His body, and is always an object of His care and blessing. On the other hand, the assembly looked at as God's corporate witness on the earth it has terribly fallen from the Pentecostal character of blessing and power in which He set it. Too often it is a witness of division, carnality, and strife, instead of keeping diligently the Spirit's unity in the uniting bond of peace, through holding the Head, subjection to the word, and owning the presence and power of the one Spirit for all true blessing and unity.

And so with our open Bible we can look around on every hand, and see things just as they are set forth there for our guidance and instruction. One thing is certain, that while God looks for individual faithfulness and separation to Himself, and will always honor few or many who are really gathered to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, yet He gives no hope of the re-construction and return of unity in general of His assembly on earth; but enjoins us individually to purge ourselves from vessels to dishonor, and be with those (if we can find them), who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:19-22).

And further, not only are we told that "God . . . hath in due times *manifested his word through preaching*," but it is also written, "Thou hast *magnified thy word*, above all thy

2. {Nor are there any types of the body of Christ, as such.}

name” (Titus 1:3; Psa. 138:2). So that, because Scripture is God’s word, it assures us, without any question, of what is His mind and will concerning us. By it every one who has truly looked as a lost sinner to the Lord Jesus Christ as the Object of faith and trust, is assured that his sins are forgiven, and blotted out for ever. “To him [Christ] give all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins”; and “their sins, and iniquities will I remember no more” (Acts 10:43; Heb. 10:17).

Such know, also, on the authority of the Scriptures, that they have eternal life given to them, and that they possess it. We never find an apostle saying, “I *feel* that I have this and that, and because I feel it I know I have it.” Never; because feelings quickly change, and the word never directs us to look at our feelings for evidence, but at what God says. Now what does He say about the present gift of eternal life? He says, in John’s first epistle, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” He does not say here that you may *feel* it, but *know* it; know it on the authority of God’s word, which we are told was written that we might *know*, with divine certainty, that we have eternal life. “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” Nothing can be more simple, more decided, more comforting, to such as trust God according to His own word. Nothing less is faith. Oh the untold blessedness of knowing, and being able truthfully to say, that God hath given to me eternal life, communicated it to me, and this life is in His Son Christ my life, so that Christ liveth in me; and so real that it comes out in affections, thoughts, and feelings according to Him. “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:14). How very comforting, and yet how solemn!

And more than this; for nothing short of having us in the new and eternal relationship of children could suit the Father’s heart; and this, too, the Scriptures clearly teach, not only for present comfort, but to bring out the duties and affections that necessarily flow from knowing such an endearing relationship. The Scripture not only says, “Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” but goes on to tell us that the Holy Spirit *dwells* in us because we are sons. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father”; and it is also clear that those who have the Spirit in them know that they are God’s children; for “the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, [the new life or nature], that we are the children of God” (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:16). Those then who know, or are personally assured, on the authority of God’s word, that they are children of God, have received the Spirit, and can approach God as their Father. We have received “the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” Duties and affections, as we have said, flow from known relationships; for how can any one manifest the love, interest, subjection, and devotion of a child, or walk as a child, unless he knows he is a child? O the unfathomable blessedness and treasure of the Scriptures!

And yet more still. We learn also from the page of

inspiration, that the believer is now set by God in a totally new standing, “in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”; so that he is recognized and addressed in the epistles as not in his sins, not in the flesh, not under law, not of the world, not now in Adam, but “in the Spirit,” and “in Christ Jesus.” Hence there is a new creation in Christ Jesus, and such are always before God in all the nearness and acceptance of “the Beloved.” What a position of favour and blessing to be always thus before God in all the nearness and relationship of children? Known too on the unfailing authority of His word, with joy and peace in believing, and for such present blessing that we may rejoice in the Lord always, obey His word, and wait for His return from heaven. The question now for every true believer is not, Am I in Christ? or am I a child of God? for God has told such in His word, as we have seen, over and over again, that these questions are settled for ever; but the important question for us is, “Am I living in the enjoyment of communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ?” How can this be, if His word be not loved, received, and meditated on by us, as the treasury of His thoughts, affections, purposes, and ways? Jesus said,

If a man love me, he will keep my words . . . he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine but the Father’s which sent me (John 14:21-24).

Concluding Remarks

The important practical question is, How do we treat the Bible? Do we honor it because it is the word of God? Are we guided by its counsels? Have we proved its sufficiency? Do we, when we read it, meditate on it, and mix faith with it, and realize the personal enjoyment of its soul-comforting ministrations? Do we habitually rely on the Holy Spirit to enable us to discern, receive, and communicate its precious mysteries? “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true” (John 3:33).

Why then do we read the holy Scriptures? Because they reveal “the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,” and are written for our learning and comfort. To neglect them is therefore very serious. The faithful in all ages have been noted for standing for the authority of the sacred writings. Moreover they give us divine assurance as to the eternal future, as well as sure guidance for every step of the way.

How do we read the Bible? is also a searching question. If we approach the imperishable word with the thought of our own competency to discern and understand it, then let it not be surprising if we get nothing from it, or fall into the most grievous errors (1 Cor. 2:14). If, on the contrary, the reader takes his true place on opening the sacred volume of utter inability to discern the deep things of God, and waits on God to guide and teach him by the Holy Spirit, then he will never be disappointed, and, mixing faith with the word, will find much profit and blessing.

Again, we may remind the Christian reader of the tendency to read certain favorite chapters or books, instead of “all Scripture”: consequently such do not get a grasp of the

scope of the written word, and are always uncertain as to what the sacred volume really contains. We are not now speaking of reading the Scriptures publicly or in the family, but of reading them privately to honor God, to find food and blessing for our souls, as well as intelligence as to how to walk and please God.

When do we read the word of God? is another important question. With those who have to arise from their beds early, and have much to do, there is often a strong temptation to put off the private reading of the word of truth till later on in the day; the consequence is that other things so engage the mind that such either give up reading, or are unable to apply themselves to the study of the word, and therefore decline in soul. The *best* things in Israel were devoted to the Lord. Our Lord was found in prayer *a great while before day*. The manna came down *early*, and they had to gather it before sunrise; and our Lord said, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and his righteousness." Now it is manifest, that if we are to seek God's things *first*, having to do with Him and His word would precede our having to do with earthly things. We hesitate not to say that such as practically rank earthly things *before* the heavenly occupation of prayer and reading of the word are not honoring God as they should; and we believe much of the failure even in God's people can be traced to their not giving the things of God the "*first*," and therefore the "*best*" place.

It is said, that when Dr. Johnson was told that Mr. -- had imbibed infidel notions as to the Scriptures, he replied, "He never read the Bible." We believe the same may be said of many a busy sceptic in the present day. The misquotations that some of them make, as well as the egregious errors and misapplications of Scripture, leave no doubt as to this; but those who do "search the Scriptures," pray over them for divine guidance and teaching in humility and uprightness before God, learn to say with an ancient prophet,

thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word
was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.

And further, those who follow on to know the Lord through meditation in faith of the written word, and faithful walk, sooner or later discover that the great testimony of the sacred volume from beginning to end is Christ; and those indeed are blessed who have thus learned that "Christ is all." Happy indeed is the reader, who can truly say, Christ is all my salvation, all my desire, my life, my righteousness, my peace, my hope. All my springs are in Him. Christ is my refuge, my resource, my strength, my food, my Friend, my power for all fruit bearing. So absolutely is He all to me, that without Him I can do nothing, apart from Him I have nothing, and am nothing! In turning then to the sacred pages, may we never forget that they testify of Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God! And looking off unto Jesus where He now is, and waiting for His coming, we can happily sing --

"He's gone within the veil,
For us that place has won;
In Him we stand, a heavenly band,
Where He Himself has gone.
And stayed by joy divine,
As hireling fills his day;
Through scenes of strife, and desert life,
We tread in peace our way.
That way is upward still,
Where life and glory are;
Our rest's above, in perfect love
The glory we shall share.
For ever with the Lord,
For ever like Him then,
And see His face in that blest place,
Our Father's house in heaven."

Peace And Communion

by
H. H. Snell

Having Made Peace Through The Blood of His Cross
(Col. 1:20)

Our Fellowship is with the Father,
and with His Son Jesus Christ.
(1 John 1:3).

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Prefatory Remarks

It is not with the thought of publishing anything unknown before that this little volume is sent forth, but with the hope of bringing before the Christian reader what was well known in the beginning of Christianity, though now, perhaps, receiving less attention than the truth demands.

It is confessedly a time when every good thing is being diluted or adulterated; nor has the truth of God escaped the corrupting influences, so that many of the Lord's people are sad and drooping instead of giving thanks and rejoicing; and collective ruin and disorder instead of worship, and united testimony to the truth, are to be seen on every hand. It must therefore be important to inquire where the defect lies in those who are truly born of God. We believe much of it arises from a low state of soul, a superficial acquaintance with divine truth, and an erroneous idea that God's word is given only to teach sinners the way of salvation, and that there is little to be known here besides the forgiveness of sins. But as to souls who are better instructed, and where doctrine is guarded, and orthodoxy contended for, the question may be asked, Why is it there is so little liberty, joy, and devotedness? We believe the answer is found in a lack of peace and communion.

Where there is not

peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:1},
there cannot be communion and true worship. If "care" and "fear" distress the soul, there will not be the comfort of

the peace of God {Phil. 4:7},
which surpasseth all understanding, keeping the heart and mind. If we walk in His ways,
the God of peace {Rom. 15:33}
will be with us.

Joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:11}
is also the happy privilege of every child of God; but how few speak of these things as their own happy experience. It is not merely, then, the present certainty of forgiveness of sins (blessed as it is) which the believer is entitled to know, but

peace with God {Rom. 5:1},
the peace of God {Phil. 4:7},
the presence of

the God of peace {Phil. 4:9}
with us, and even

joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:11},
by whom we have received the reconciliation, and much more.

While many a true-hearted Christian is suffering greatly in soul from lack of knowledge, others, perhaps, are too much taken up with doctrines; content, it may be, with critical accuracy and orthodoxy, rather than the power of the truth in the love of it. The consequence is that some have unconsciously become more like theological students and scholars of divinity, than devoted followers of Christ in the

path of obedience and suffering for His sake. It is clear that it is not merely the knowledge of doctrines that the child of God should desire, important as it is, but he should be occupied with the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all doctrine points, and in relation to whom we now stand as

members of His body {Eph. 5:30},
dependent on

the Head {see Eph. 4:15; Col. 2:19},
and called to show forth His characteristics, and to bear much fruit. We may be sure that when the word of Christ dwells in us richly, there will be faith and love in activity, as well as knowledge; there will be communion as well as peace. We can understand a person being taken up with certain "views," as they are called, and holding what is true, perhaps, according to the letter of Scripture, and yet being as unspiritual and lifeless as he can well be; but we cannot understand a soul really receiving God's testimony concerning the personal glory, the finished work, and the coming again of His own Son, without being attracted to Him. Neither can we understand a person having the present possession of eternal life without its producing results, both in experience and walk. Scripture is most decisive about this; for not only does John write his first epistle in order that those who believe on the name of the Son of God may know that they have eternal life, but he further declares that

we know that we have passed from death unto life because
we love the brethren (1 John 3:14);
and when this love to God's children is wanting, the person is pronounced to be destitute of vital Christianity, however loud his profession may be, and however extensive his Bible knowledge; for it is added.

He that loveth not his brother abideth in death
(1 John 5:13).

This point was also of such great moment with the apostle Paul, that we find the principle on which he accredited persons as being "in Christ" was not because they professedly believed in Christ, but because he also heard of their

love . . . to all the saints {Col. 1:4};
their

love in the Spirit {Col. 1:8}.

He knew how easy it was *to say* "I believe in Jesus," as many do now; but until he heard of love flowing out to all saints, how could he recognize them as having eternal life? We, therefore, on one occasion find him teaching that whatever a man did, or whatever he said, if love were wanting, he was only

as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal {1 Cor. 13:1}.

Take another point. Scripture teaches that those who have remission of sins have the Holy Ghost given unto them; being children of God by faith in Christ Jesus,

God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 3:26; 4:6).

Now, we ask, is it possible that God the Holy Ghost should take up His abode in us for ever, without producing results both in experience and walk? Without this, could there be a consciousness of the love of God shed abroad *in our hearts*? (See Rom. 5:5.) Have we no *comfort* from a power within us beyond what is natural in His leading, guiding, teaching, and taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us? Do we know what it is to have One directing our hearts to Him who is glorified, and in whom we possess all things, whilst we are increasingly conscious of having nothing in ourselves? Can

we ascribe our joy in the Lord, our hope of His coming, or even the grief, and reproof when walking contrary to the truth of God, to any power short of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us? And how could our thoughts and affections flow in the current of the thoughts and affections of the Father and His Son, but for

the communion of the Holy Ghost {2 Cor. 13:14}?

May, then, both reader and writer be filled with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost!

The Son of God

God . . . hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son
(Hebrews 1:2).

The question by which our Lord put the Pharisees to silence, so that

no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions {Matt. 22:46},

was concerning the mystery of His person. Though they knew that Messiah would be the Son of David, they were completely confounded when asked how the Christ could be both David's Lord and David's son (Matt. 22:41-46).

And still,

What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He? {Matt. 22:44}.

are the vital questions on which hangs the eternal destiny of man. It must therefore be of all importance to learn from Scripture what is revealed concerning Him; for types have prefigured Him, prophets have heralded Him, one more than a prophet was His forerunner, a multitude of the heavenly host hailed His entrance into this world, and apostles have most blessedly dwelt on the glory of His person, the everlasting efficacy of His atoning work, the offices He now so perfectly sustains, and on His coming again. May we then ponder the inspired writings which testify of THE SON with that reverence and subjection, which become those who delight to hearken to God's testimony of Him!

We know that the Son of God is come {1 John 5:20}.

The Word which was with God, and was God, became flesh, and dwelt among us: and God, whom no man has seen, has been declared by the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father. The divine moral glory so shone in Him, that Spirit-taught witnesses tell us,

We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth {John 1:14}.

In olden times, the thorough sinlessness of this peerless One was continually set forth, by the imperative requirement, that each victim sacrificed should be

without blemish and without spot {1 Pet. 1:19},

and His inimitable moral excellencies were borne witness to in the sweet perfume of the burning incense; while various offerings typically expressed His perfect surrender, and devotedness, as well as the savour of rest God always found in Him, both in life and in death. The laying down of the victim's life, the shedding and sprinkling of the blood, the entrance of the high priest inside the veil once every year, not without blood and incense, all pointed to Him, whose blood was shed for many for the remission of sins, and in virtue of whose one offering the veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, thus removing every hindrance to the believer's going at once into the presence of God.

Of the person of the Son of God, as also of His sufferings, and the glories which follow, ancient prophets have sweetly

spoken by the Holy Ghost. The promised Seed -- the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, the virgin's Child -- has been manifested according to their word, in the mysterious person of Emmanuel. The babe of Judah's prophet has been born, and the Son given, whose name is

The mighty God,

The Prince of Peace {Isa. 9:6};

who will ere long establish His kingdom with judgment and justice

upon the throne of David {Isa. 9:7}.

According to others, Israel's Ruler has come out of Bethlehem, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting {Micah 5:2}.

The true Shepherd, the Fellow of the Lord of hosts, has been smitten, and the sheep have been scattered (Zech. 13:7). The Antitype of Isaac has been offered up, and raised again. The blood of the true paschal Lamb has been shed, and a way made for us through death and judgment into the very presence of God. It is no marvel then, that His forerunner should have been divinely taught that He was

the Son of God {John 1:32-34},

should have announced Him to be

the Lamb of God {John 1:36},

and have declared that He who came after him into the world was really before Him -- for THE SON was before all things -- and that His shoes' latchet he was unworthy to unloose.

Prophets also foretold that He -- the Son, Messiah -- would be despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, sold for thirty pieces of silver, and His hands and feet pierced; that His garments would be parted by the soldiers among them, and lots cast upon His vesture. They also declared that He would be numbered with the transgressors, and bear the sins of many; that it would please Jehovah to bruise Him, and to put Him to grief; that the cry of His distress would be,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
{Psa. 22:1}.

That though He would be made an offering for sin, and pour out His soul unto death, making His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; yet it was clearly announced that His soul would not be left in hell [hades], neither His flesh see corruption, but that, having been shown the path of life, He would go back to Him

in whose presence there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore {see Psa. 16:11}.

Jehovah therefore said to the mighty Conqueror over death, Satan, and the grave,

Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool {Psa. 110:1}.

For this we know He waits, and of Him it has been said,

The Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment {Jude verse 14},

and that He will sit

upon David's throne {see Isa. 9:7},

and

reign before His ancients gloriously {see Isa. 24:23}.

From this brief glance at the Old Testament prophets, we see that they spake of Him

who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:6-11).

When the prophet Isaiah refers to this period, he says,

I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by Myself, the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear (Isa. 45:22, 23).

But when an apostle brings it before us, he applies it to Christ, thus giving another example of Scripture-teaching on the deity of the Son. He says,

We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10),

and in proof of it quotes this passage from Isaiah:

For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God (Rom. 14:11).

We see the same interpretation of the prophets elsewhere; we might turn for example to Isa. 6:1-8, compared with John 12:41 and Acts 28:23-28, which also give the clearest testimony to the Godhead of Christ.

It is no wonder, then, that a multitude of the heavenly host should introduce THE SON into this world with,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men (Luke 2:14),

or that the apostles should so dwell on the glory and perfections of His person, and be inspired to make Him known to others as the Object for our unchanging delight. One of these divinely-taught writers says,

We have seen with our eyes, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us (1 John 1:1, 2).

Another sets forth the divine glory of the Son to the Colossians, as

the image of the invisible God, the First-born of every

creature: for by Him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the Firstborn from [among] the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence. For in Him all the fulness was pleased to dwell; and, having made peace through the blood of His cross, &c. (Col. 1:15-20).

What a precious cluster of glories is here presented for our contemplation! How clearly they speak to us of the deity of the Son!

Again, in the Hebrews we are told that

God, . . . hath in these last days

-- after all the varied testimony of prophets --

spoken unto us in [the person of the] Son (see Heb. 1:1, 2);

and we propose now to look a little, with the Lord's help, at what is recorded for our blessing concerning Him in the earlier chapters of this epistle. Before, however, proceeding farther, it may be well to press upon the reader the importance of making the word of God as much as possible our vocabulary when speaking of the unfathomable mystery of THE SON; and, in all simplicity of faith, receiving what God has declared of Him for our intelligence and blessing, instead of drawing deductions, reasoning out conclusions, or allowing ourselves to think or speak of Him according to human phraseology, and thus unconsciously gliding into serious error. We may be certain that

no man knoweth THE SON but the Father {Matt. 11:27},

and that enough has been revealed of Him in Scripture for our instruction and comfort.

In Heb. 1 and 2 THE SON is remarkably brought before us; in chapter 1 as to His eternal Godhead, and in chapter 2 as to His manhood. Yet not exclusively so in either chapter; for how could this blessed One, who is both God and man in one Person, be divided? Perhaps there has not been a more fruitful source of error than the attempt to do this. In both these chapters however, Scriptures are quoted which specially refer to Him as Messiah.

In the first, He is also presented as the Purger of sins, and then as sitting down on the right hand of God; both which wonderful acts He did being man, yet as no one less than God could do. In the second we see that He took part in the children's flesh and blood; He takes not hold of angels but of Abraham's seed; that He is the Sanctifier, and the One who, under the title of Son of Man, will put all things under His feet. Thus we find that when the Holy Ghost brings before us the eternal Godhead of THE SON, He also reminds us that He is man; and when He specially presents Him to us as man, He shows us that the Child born -- the Messiah -- is the mighty God. How could He be Maker of *all* things, Heir of *all* things, Upholder of *all* things, and how could He put *all* things under His feet, except He were verily and truly God? And how could He take part in flesh and blood, be the Purger of sins, taste death for everyone, and sit upon the throne of David, without being verily and truly man -- the woman's Seed, Son of Abraham, and Son of David, according to the flesh? Hence Scripture says,

It is *Christ* that died {Rom. 8:34},

that

the Son of man {see John 3:14, 8:28, 12:34}

was lifted up, and that God

spared not *His own Son*, but delivered Him up for us all {Rom. 8:32}.

It was the glory of His person which gave such eternal value to His work; whereas, among men, it is the dignity of the work which gives honor to the person.

In Heb. 1 THE SON is looked at as

from everlasting to everlasting (Psa. 90:2).

He is therefore infinitely above angels -- the highest class of created intelligences that man knows; for He had a more excellent name, was emphatically called by Jehovah, "My Son," and He called God, "Father." The Son, as man, is now exalted to the Father's throne, the One to whom angels, and principalities, and powers are made subject; and the world to come will not be put under angels, but under Him, to whom it was said,

Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool {Psa. 110:1}.

THE SON, then, is infinitely above angels, who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall inherit salvation. That Holy Thing which was born of Mary is called the Son of God, but being also eternally divine in His own person, He is no less than the effulgence of God's glory, and the exact expression of His substance. He is therefore before all things, and greater than all things; for all things were created by Him, and by Him all things subsist.

In the first twelve verses of this chapter, THE SON is, as we have said, particularly looked at in His Godhead character. He is truly

the First and the Last {Rev. 22:13}.

Not only did He most truthfully say,

Before Abraham was I am {John 8:58},

but He was before anything was which is made, for it is said of Him,

By whom also He made the worlds (Heb. 1:2).

We read elsewhere also that He had glory with the Father before the world was, and, Father and Son being relative terms, we find here His eternal Sonship most plainly revealed. (Heb. 1:2; John 17:5). Moreover, we are taught that the Father's counsel and purpose, and love to us; were in the Son before creation --

According as He hath chosen us in Him *before the foundation of the world*, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love (Eph. 1:4).

THE SON, then, is eternally divine. We are instructed by an inspired prophet that one attribute of Godhead is Creator.

To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number. . . . Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, Jehovah, *the Creator of the ends of the earth*, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding (Isa. 40:25-28).

He, then, who created all things is Jehovah. We have, therefore,

in this first aspect of THE SON, the clearest possible proof of His being

from everlasting {Psa. 90:2; Micah 5:2; Hab. 1:12}.

Secondly, He is brought before us as the One who did by Himself make purification of sins, and set Himself down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3). As man had sinned, man must bear the penalty of divine justice for sin; and since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; but who could satisfy the infinite claims of God's justice? or drink up the cup of His eternal condemnation of sin, but one who was divine Himself? Who else could glorify God about our sins, could put them away for ever, and cleanse us by His own blood, but He who had eternal attributes -- the Son sent by the Father to be the Savior of the world? Again, who but He could step from the sepulcher to the throne of God, and take His rightful place there? It is not here the aspect of His resurrection as being raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, most precious as that view is; but it is THE SON, who descended first into the lower parts of the earth, lay in the grave till the third day (thus giving the most decided proof of His actual death), rose again from among the dead in the glory of His own eternal excellency, and took His place on heaven's throne, to which He was righteously entitled --

who . . . when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. 1:3).

Blessed be God, there He is, the ascended, glorified Man, and made

both Lord and Christ {Acts 2:36}.

Thus, in the second and third verses of this chapter, we find THE SON is looked at *before time*, or from everlasting, as the One by whom everything was made; and *in time* purging sins by Himself, and then sitting down in the highest place of power and glory at God's right hand.

Thirdly, there THE SON still sits; but He is coming again, and then He will be the Object of the worship of angels, even as now in heaven angels, and authorities, and powers are made subject to Him. Hence we read:

And again, when He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him (Heb. 1:6).

It need scarcely be said that worship could not be rendered by *all* the angelic beings which surround the throne of God to any one who was less than God. To no creature, however blessed by God, or endued with divine power, could such honor be rightly accorded; the idea would be sinful in the extreme. Angels know who the Son is, and that He died for man on the cross; they announced His entrance into the world when born in Bethlehem, they afterward tracked His solitary and perfect path, and ministered unto Him; and when He comes to the world in power and glory, they will accompany Him. Whatever may be the measure of the intelligence of angels, it is quite clear that they know to whom worship rightly belongs; for when John was once and again so overcome with the bright shining of an angel, and the wonderful things made known to him, that he fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which showed him these things, it was at once refused. Instead of the angel accepting the homage, he rebuked the erring apostle, saying,

See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and [the fellow-

servant] of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this Book: worship God (Rev. 19:10, 22:9, 10).

Angels, then, who clearly know that God is the true object of worship, will take their happy place of rendering worship to THE SON when He comes as the First-born into the world, and in this they will be of one accord, for it is said,

Let *all* the angels of God worship Him {Heb. 1:6}.

Fourthly, then His rightful place on earth will be the throne; for He comes not to suffer, but to reign. As the true David, He will occupy His own throne; for all things are to be subdued by Him unto Himself, before He delivers up the kingdom to God even the Father,

when He shall have put down *all* rule and *all* authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put *all* enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:24, 25).

He will establish, too, His ancient people in their hoped-for earthly glory, when all the promises shall be made good to them. And who but One, who is God, could take possession of *all* things, and subdue *all* things to Himself? We read, therefore,

But unto THE SON he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows (Heb. 1:8, 9).

Thus, in millennial glory, when THE SON -- the Messiah -- takes His kingly place of power, and reigns before His ancients gloriously, our attention is again called to contemplate Him in His eternal Godhead. Fellows, or companions, He will doubtless have; but here, as in all things, He must have the pre-eminence. It is unquestionably the millennial time in which we here behold THE SON; for it is characterized by *righteousness*, according to the Scripture,

A king shall reign in righteousness {Isa. 32:1}.

Now God is preaching forgiveness of sins, and bearing with this evil world in marvelous patience and long-suffering; but when THE SON sits on His own throne, He will wield the scepter of righteousness; for, as we observed, *righteousness* will characterize His kingdom, *not grace*. It will be manifest that He loves righteousness, and hates iniquity; and because He is eternally divine, will be able to subdue *all* things unto Himself. Then He will show

who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen (1 Tim. 6:15, 16).

Fifthly, as the eternal Godhead of THE SON has been looked at *from* everlasting {Psa. 90:2},

before the worlds were made, He is also brought before us as *to* everlasting {Psa. 41:13, Psa. 90:2},

when heaven and earth shall have passed away. Now He is upholding all things, and by Him all things consist; but when, according to the divine counsels, this old creation shall have fulfilled its course, and have for ever passed away, THE SON will still be known in all His unchanging freshness and glory. He by whom all things were made will lay aside, as a garment, what

is perishable and has waxen old. We read:

Thou, LORD, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail (Heb. 1:10-12).

Can there be a clearer testimony to the eternal Godhead of the Son? Who else could have brought everything that is made into existence? or who but He who is Almighty could fold up and lay aside this vast universe, and yet Himself remain in all His infinite and unchanging attributes? Most truly did He say in the days of His flesh,

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away {Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33}.

What man, what angel; what creature, could truthfully utter such an authoritative sentence? Well might His hearers have been sometimes astonished, and exclaim that

He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes {Matt. 7:29}.

Thus has it been our happy privilege to trace in this inspired word THE SON eternally divine before all worlds; then as the Maker of all things; then as purging sins, rising victoriously over death, and taking His rightful place on the Father's throne. We have also been contemplating Him as the One whom angels universally will worship, when He comes into the world in power and glory, to reign as King of kings, sitting on His own throne; and, lastly, when time shall cease, and this old creation pass away, we have been instructed, that His eternal attributes will shine out in all their divine and unchanging glory and freshness. Well, indeed, has it been added,

Jesus Christ [is] the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8}.

“Thou art the everlasting Word,
The Father's only Son;
God manifest, God seen and heard,
The Heaven's beloved One:
In Thee, most perfectly expressed,
The Father's self doth shine;
Fulness of Godhead, too: the Blest --
Eternally Divine.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow.”

The Son of Man

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor: that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man (Heb. 2:9).

The Word, by whom all things were made, became flesh and dwelt among us. But He who is divine is also Son of man -- God was manifested in the flesh. God sent forth His Son made of a woman. Jesus Christ has come in flesh. He, who being in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, was found here in fashion as a man, and took a servant's form. He ate and drank, suffered hunger, thirst, and weariness. He slept, He walked, He prayed, He preached and taught. He resisted and overcame Satan in temptation. He groaned and was troubled, He wept, He was grieved for the hardness of men's hearts, and looked round about on them with anger. He so lovingly entered into the sufferings of those around, cast out devils, and healed all manner of sickness with His word, that it was said by the prophet,

Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses {Matt. 8:17; see Isa. 53:4}.

He was then verily man, born of a woman, though without sin, and in every respect perfect, spotless, holy, harmless, and undefiled.

THE SON, however, did not become incarnate in order to make Himself one with sinners, but that He might die for our sins, and, rising again, make us one with Himself. It is of all importance to see this clearly; for how could the Holy One unite Himself with fallen and sinful men, who justly merited the wrath of God? THE SON, therefore, had a solitary path through this world. By reason of His essential holiness and perfect purity, He could not be otherwise than

separate from sinners {Heb. 7:26},

however much He went about doing good. There could not possibly, therefore, be union between us and Himself, until sin had been judged, and we were cleansed. This the Lord most clearly taught. Referring to Himself, He said,

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit {John 12:24}.

For this we know the Father sent the Son. He came to die, for He came to save. In no other way could the righteous demands of God, or the necessities of our case, be met; for man had sinned, and the penalty of death had come in by sin. He, therefore, took part in the children's flesh and blood,

that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage {Heb. 2:14, 15}.

He took not hold of angels, but He took hold of the seed of Abraham, for Messiah was the promised seed of Abraham, and also of David,

of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God, blessed for ever (Rom. 9:5).

Thus Christ is both God and Man.

His life, here, however, was one of suffering. He was truly a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief {Isa. 53:3}.

He came for the suffering of death. He suffered having been tempted, which must have been deep distress to His infinitely holy soul. He suffered that, as the Captain or Leader of our salvation, He might be made perfect through sufferings. He not only knew every step of the way and every circumstance connected with us, as Omniscient, but He passed through everything that was needed to perfect Him for the office of Leader of our salvation. Though He were a Son, and thus could command all to obey Him, yet He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. His perfectness was in obeying in every respect in circumstances most adverse and painful. His love, subjection, obedience, and faith -- all were perfect. And having been perfected, and glorified as man at God's right hand, He is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him (Heb. 5:8, 9). Ah! who can tell the variety and depth of the sufferings of our precious Lord!

He suffered from man for righteousness' sake -- was hated without a cause, despised, and rejected. He suffered from Satan in temptation and bruising --

Thou shalt bruise His heel {Gen. 3:15}.

He suffered (alas, how deeply!) by reason of His wondrous love for His own nation, from God's governmental dealings with them because of their sin, for

in all their affliction He was afflicted {Isa. 63:9};

and He suffered from God atoningly for sins, the just for the unjust (how unfathomable to us!), when He cried out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1; Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34}.

God only knows the love and sorrow that met there. What a death was

the death of the cross {Phil 2:8}!

But His was a victorious death; and, as it has been said, "He death by dying slew." He saw no corruption. His soul was not left in hades. He rose from the dead, for it was not possible that He should be holden of death. He went through death, and annulled death, and

him that had the power of death -- that is, the devil {see Heb. 2:14}.

Thus He triumphed over death, and Satan, and the grave. The Son of man is therefore a risen, victorious Savior.

When John was so overcome by a sight of the glorified Son of man that he fell at His feet as dead, the Lord graciously comforted His servant by assuring him that, though He was dead, He is now for evermore a living Person, and holding in triumph the keys of death and hades.

He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not;

I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell [hades] and of death (Rev. 1:17, 18).

Thus the Son of man has triumphed. Death could not detain Him. He rose from among the dead. His was certainly a victorious death.

By man came death {1 Cor. 15:21},

we know, and here we see,

by man came also the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor. 15:21).

Hence we find that after Jesus rose from the dead, He showed Himself alive again by many infallible proofs, being seen of His disciples, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. He appeared in their midst, showed them His hands and His side, gave commandments, breathed on them, and said,

Receive ye the Holy Ghost {John 20:22};

and expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. When some who saw Him were terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit, He fully demonstrated to them the reality of His own actual and bodily resurrection from among the dead. He said unto them,

Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and any feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when He had thus spoken, He showed them His hands and His feet (Luke 24:37-40).

Moreover, He led them out as far as to Bethany, and while He blessed them, was parted from them, and carried up into heaven; and they watched Him ascending higher and higher, until a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they steadfastly looked toward heaven, hoping to catch another glimpse of their precious Savior, heavenly messengers stood by them, and said,

Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

Nothing can more fully prove the reality of the resurrection of the man Christ Jesus from among the dead. This was victory indeed.

And, as we have just seen, He has ascended. We now

see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor (Heb. 2:9).

We *remember* that He was in death, but we *see* Him glorified at the right hand of God. A man in glory: what a precious Object for our hearts! He that descended first into the lower parts of the earth is ascended above all heavens;

far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come (Eph. 4:2, 10; and 1:21).

There He is highly exalted -- a glorified Man. There Stephen, when he

looked up steadfastly into heaven,

saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said,

Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55, 56).

There we now have to do with Him. There, too, we know Him in new relationships.

He is not ashamed to call them brethren; saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee (Heb. 2:11, 12).

And again, Behold, I and the children which God hath given me (Heb. 2:13).

We know, too, that it was after His triumphant resurrection, He said to Mary,

Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God {John 20:17}.

The One, therefore, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, is crowned with glory and honor.

Now He is before the face of God as our High Priest.

Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto [His] brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God (Heb. 2:17).

After having made atonement for the sins of the people by the sacrifice of Himself, He sat down on the right hand of God. There the glorified Son of man in heaven carries on His never-failing office of High Priest for us, after the Aaronic functions, but according to the Melchisedec order. He is not one that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but is merciful and faithful, able to succor us in temptation, to help in every time of need, and to bring us right through our pilgrimage to the end, seeing He ever lives to make intercession for us. He, who is of the seed of David according to the flesh, and Son of God, has passed through the heavens, and is our faithful, unchanging, and sympathizing High Priest; and when He comes the second time, and takes His Messiah throne, He will be, according to the prophetic word,

a priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:13).

-- both king and priest on earth.

He is, however, soon coming to reign,

for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto THE SON; that all should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him. . . . He hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man (John 5:22-27).

Again, we read that God

will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all, in that He hath raised Him from [among] the dead (Acts 17:31).

The Son being now at the right hand of God, is

expecting till His enemies be made His footstool {Heb. 10:13}.

Man is yet to be set over the works of God's hands. Man (not angels) is yet to subdue all things unto Himself.

For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the (habitable) world to come (Heb. 2:5);

but quoting from Psa. 8, and applying it to Jesus, the Son of man, he says,

But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man, that thou visitest Him? Thou madest Him a little lower than the angels [applied to Jesus in Heb. 2:9]; thou crownedst Him with glory and honour, and didst set Him over the works of thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet (Heb. 2:6-8).

Thus we see that the Son, who made the worlds, who became incarnate, who was tempted, who suffered and died, was victorious over death and Satan; that He ascended into the heavens, sat down on the right hand of God, entered upon His priestly functions, and is yet to come forth and take His rightful place over all things, execute all judgment, and subdue all things unto Himself.

And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all {1 Cor. 15:28}.

No doubt one chief reason why the glory and perfections of the person of THE SON are thus so fully brought out in the first and second chapters of the Hebrews is to set forth the infinite value of the one sacrifice, and the perfectness of His priestly office; for there must necessarily be an everlasting efficacy connected with all that He did. Hence, as to the offering, we read,

By one offering He hath perfected for ever [or in perpetuity] them that are sanctified {Heb. 10:14};

and, as concerning priesthood, we are told, there were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death, and

every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins; but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever [or in perpetuity] sat down on the right hand of God (Heb. 7:23; 10:11, 12).

Thus, through the infinite efficacy of the one offering, the worshipers, instead of having to do with many sacrifices which could not take away sins, are once purged, and have no more conscience of sins, so that the Holy Ghost can indwell them, and unite them to Christ in the heavens; such have also liberty to draw near to God -- to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, where our High Priest is, and where His blood ever speaks. Instead, therefore, of there being now

a remembrance of sins {see Heb. 10:3},

we remember Him, who has by His one offering for ever put away sin. Hence, though sin is in us, we have no sin on us; for we are cleansed, sanctified, and perfected for ever by the will of God, through one offering; and God has said,

Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 10:17}.

Christ being now in heaven is the clearest proof that our sins have been borne, suffered for, and are gone for ever. We have, therefore,

no more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2}.

How rich and abundant is the grace of God to us in Christ!

If, then, in virtue of the accomplished work of THE SON,

the conscience is purged, the veil is rent, and He is gone into heaven itself by His own blood, we, as purged worshipers, have therefore access to God with confidence; our hearts are attracted to where He now is, so that we run the race set before us according to His word; and we also take that position here which is suited to His mind. Hence the believer is looked at in the closing chapters of this epistle as a happy worshiper, an earnest runner, and a faithful bearer of the reproach of Christ. He is a worshiper inside the veil, where Jesus is, a runner of a race looking steadfastly unto Jesus, and outside the camp with a rejected Jesus bearing His reproach.

The liberty of access for the worshiper is here contrasted with the way of approach, while the first tabernacle was standing, according to the only ritual divinely instituted, but now done away in Christ. It was characterized by distance from God, for the veil excluded them. It was not rent -- the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest; so that they never knew what it was to be in the presence of God, as purged worshipers. The priesthood, too, was of an earthly and successional order, confined to an earthly line of things (not heavenly) as between the people and God. It was a changeable priesthood, and often interrupted by death. There was also

a worldly sanctuary {Heb. 9:1}

-- a place of worship on earth, a material building, which was the only one ever recognized as the house of God. Such was the Jewish order of things. Whereas Christianity tells us of distance having been removed by the veil being rent from the top to the bottom, when Jesus died upon the cross, so that the worshiper comes now with boldness into the holiest of all. The order of priesthood is heavenly and eternal, all believers being made priests, and Jesus the Son of God being the unchangeable High Priest. Worship, therefore, is not now connected with any particular building on earth, but with the holiest of all above,

the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man {Heb. 8:2}.

Because the Lord's people are His house, there is now no building on earth, which can be truthfully designated a house of God. (See Heb. 3:6.) It was, therefore, said by our adorable Lord,

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

To attach the idea of a sanctuary now to any building on earth is then so far to abandon Christian ground, and to go back to the Jews' religion; which is not only dishonoring to the Lord, but far more damaging to souls than many imagine; because it throws them at a distance from God, and necessitates their requiring a humanly-ordered priesthood to come between themselves and God. This the natural man likes, because it gives importance to men; while he rebels at the thoughts of divine grace, and refuses the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. But, blessed be God, we have remission of sins, and we have boldness to enter where He is. Hence we are welcomed with

Come boldly unto the throne of grace {Heb. 4:16}.

Do we know what it is to be inside the veil, in the sweet consciousness of God's

perfect love {1 John 4:18},
and in the enjoyment of

perfect peace {Isa. 26:3},

while our hearts at the same time are going out to the Father in worship and thanksgiving? It need scarcely be said that this is not the sinner drawing near in order to be cleansed, but the worshiper entering in with boldness, because he is cleansed, and has

no more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2}.

Hence it is written,

Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (Heb. 10:22).

Our Lord referred to this remarkable change in the character of worship. He said to the woman of Samaria,

Believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. . . . But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:21-24).

Worship, then, must be "in spirit" -- suited to the nature of God -- and "in truth," or according to God's own revelation of His mind. Happy indeed are those who thus worship the Father!

At the same time the believer is deeply conscious he is in a world where Jesus was, but is not, and is running on to where He is. The spiritual worshiper is also then a devoted runner; and in so doing, he is exhorted to drop every weight which impedes his course, to lay aside unbelief in all its delusive forms -- that easily besetting sin -- and to run the race set before him (Heb. 12:1-3). He is encouraged to run, not to loiter, nor to seek a resting-place, where the faithful Forerunner had none; but to follow on in the race with patient, persevering faith. Not with spasmodic or desultory efforts, but with patience; not looking to men, however well they may have been reported for their faith; but to keep the eye steadily on Him, who has run the race perfectly, who knows every step of the way, every impediment and temptation, and is now sitting on the throne of God. We are, then, to run the race set before us, looking unto Jesus (or looking steadfastly on Jesus) where He now is. Thus, turning from every other object, and fixing the eye of our heart on Him, the Leader and Completer (not of our faith, but) of faith, we must look steadfastly and dependently on Him, who has trodden the path of faith perfectly from the beginning to the end; for all our resources are in Him. We are enjoined also to

consider him {Heb. 12:3},

whose path was beset so painfully with opposition and trial; for when we well consider Him, who endured so great contradiction from sinners against Himself, we become cheered and strengthened, so that we do not grow weary and faint in our minds. The blessed Lord had joy in prospect, and so we have the bright hope of being with Him, and like Him for ever. We are told that He

for the joy which was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God {Heb. 12:2}.

The Forerunner is for us entered within the veil, and we are to run the race with patience, looking unto Him.

We are also to bear the reproach of Christ. We cannot now be associated with a worldly system of religion on earth, for the veil is rent. He suffered without the gate, and we are exhorted to go forth unto Him without the camp. Our place then here is to suffer with Christ in His rejection. God hath highly exalted Him, and has made Him the central object of His counsels; Christ must therefore be the true and only center for the faithful here. False religiousness is as displeasing to the Lord as irreligiousness itself. Yet there is a way for faith in the darkest times. The Lord has interests still on earth of deepest moment to Him. He cannot bear what is evil. It is only the more hateful to Him, when His holy name is used to accredit it; though ecclesiastical evil is often the last thing which arouses the conscience. Still the word to the faithful is,

Let every one who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity {see 2 Tim. 2:19},

and

go forth . . . unto Him without the camp {Heb. 13:13}.

This brings its "reproach," but it is the path of blessing. To turn away from what is not according to His truth, and, to

go forth . . . unto Him without the camp,

is clearly His will concerning its, It may entail painful severances; but to be out to the Lord, and

with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart {2 Tim. 2:22},

is the divinely ordered path; and that is enough for a true heart.

Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13:11-13).

It has been rightly said that a worldly religion, which forms a system in which the world can walk, and in which the religious element is adapted to man on earth, is the denial of Christianity.

May we know increasingly the blessedness of being inside the veil as purged worshipers, outside the camp with Christ in faithfulness to His name, and patient runners of the race which ere long will bring us into His presence for ever:

for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry (Heb. 10:37).

When the Lord presents Himself as

the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star {Rev. 22:16},

it is immediately said,

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come {Rev. 22:17}!

so we may be assured it is the apprehension of His blessed person that will keep fresh in our souls the hope of His coming -- the earnest desire of seeing His face.

Thy love we own, Lord Jesus;
Thy way is traced before Thee;
Thou wilt descend and we ascend,
To meet in heavenly glory.
Soon shall the blissful morning
Call forth Thy saints to meet Thee;
Our only Lord, alone adored,
With gladness then we'll greet Thee.

The Gospel of God

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:16, 17).

In the opening verses of the epistle to the saints at Rome, the gospel is spoken of as God's gospel -- God's power unto salvation. It is that in which the righteousness of God is revealed. All is of God; and we are told what the gospel is about, what it reveals, what its power, and on whom its marvelous blessings are conferred. God is the source of all our blessings, and all is made ours on the principle of faith. We observe that Paul was an apostle by calling, and separated unto the work of the gospel by the sovereign acting of the Holy Ghost. He tells us he had received grace. Those, too, in Rome, to whom he wrote, were saints by calling, beloved of God, called of Jesus Christ. All these ways were entirely of grace, and completely opposed to the principle of law.

The real value and point of the glad tidings of God, however, can only be rightly estimated by the consideration of the alarming fact, stated in connection with these verses, that

the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (Rom. 1:18),

which shows that God's terrible judgment against all that is contrary to Himself is coming upon men from heaven. It is not a local or partial intervention of God's anger, but

against all ungodliness.

Divine wrath then is coming, and happy are those who, like the Thessalonians, can say they are delivered from the wrath to come. But let us not fail to notice, that wrath is revealed from heaven, not only against all that is hostile to God, but against all those, who, while holding the letter of the truth, are practicing unrighteous ways. In the days of our Lord, the Jews were the holders of the truth. All the truth of God known in the world was with them. The oracles of God had been committed unto them; but, alas! what grievous unrighteousness was among them, culminating in preferring a robber to Christ, and spitting upon and crucifying the Savior whom God had sent. In our day Christendom holds the truth -- professes to be for Christ in contradistinction to Mahometanism {Islam}, Judaism, and idolatry; but the prophetic delineation of the last days is being rapidly fulfilled, that men would be

covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

What is this but holding the truth in unrighteousness? And on such may we not expect that the heaviest blow of the wrath of God will speedily fall? Are we not told concerning those who received not *the love of the truth*, that God will judicially send

men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who *believed not the truth*, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (see 2 Thess. 2:11, 12)?

However, the solemn and arousing fact remains unmistakably clear, that

the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness.

It is in connection with this alarming warning that the glad tidings of God are sent forth.

First, it is well to observe that the gospel is

the gospel of God {Rom. 1:1}

-- God's message to man. It declares there is goodness in God's heart toward man. It is a ministry that makes no demands on man, but communicates glad tidings, which can make him happy (sinner though he be), and at rest in God's infinitely holy presence. In the gospel God speaks, and it becomes man to hearken. If a prophet in olden times said,

Hear and your soul shall live {Isa. 55:3},

the blessed Master was wont to say,

He that *heareth* my word, and *believeth* on Him that sent me, *hath* everlasting life {John 5:24};

and an apostle could write, that

faith cometh by *hearing*, and hearing by the word of God {Rom. 10:17}.

It is the *goodness* of God which leadeth to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

It was, then,

the gospel of God

that Paul preached; and these glad tidings he was ready to minister in Rome by the will of God. It appears that up to that time no apostle had visited Rome. The gospel had effectually reached souls in that city by other instrumentality. Many there had evidently received it as the word of God, inasmuch as their faith was spoken of throughout the whole world. But there seems to have been something wanting in them, as to their grounding in

the righteousness of God {Rom. 3:22}

-- the prominent subject of the epistle; so that Paul expressed himself as ready to preach to them at Rome as well as to others. He opens the epistle, therefore, with the foundation principles of the gospel; first of all asserting that it is

the gospel of God;

not like the law, which demanded righteousness and love from the creature, but God manifesting Himself in the activity of His own grace for man's eternal salvation and blessing.

Secondly, let us not fail to notice what the glad tidings of God are about. We are told they are

concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 1:3}.

Whatever may be its effects, its source is from God, and the subject of it the Son of God -- David's Son and David's Lord -- who was raised from the dead. The gospel of God then sets before us the person and work of His Son, who was essentially and eternally Divine, and yet perfect Man; for only such a Savior could meet our need, or answer the just claims of the Majesty on high.

To redeem us He must be a sinless, spotless, perfect Man; for, had there been the least flaw attachable to Him, He would have had to be judged for it, and therefore unfit to be a substitute for us. But, blessed be God, He was the

holy thing {Luke 1:35}

as born of Mary; and after thirty years of trial and temptation in a path of sorrow and grief, the heavens opened over Him, and a voice from the excellent glory declared,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased {Matt. 3:17}.

Beside this, because of His perfect spotlessness, the Holy Ghost came down and abode upon Him. This could not have been, had there been in Him the least taint of imperfection. When the Holy Ghost indwells a believer now, it is in virtue of his having received remission of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus; for the Holy Ghost could not take up His abode in anyone not cleansed from sin. The Holy Ghost then coming down and abiding on the Son of God, was another infallible proof of the perfect spotlessness of His person.

But while we needed a Savior who was perfect Man, that He might, as our Substitute, bear our sins in His own body on the tree, and be made sin for us, it was also necessary that He should be a Person having such capacities and attributes, that He could bear God's eternal judgment of sin, and be able to satisfy all the demands of infinite holiness and righteousness. All this He could do because He was Son of God, and also Son of David -- God and man -- in His own spotless person. By His one offering on the cross then He discharged all the claims of divine righteousness as to our sin and guilt, and in it glorified God. The gospel of God, therefore, must be concerning His Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who was of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and raised up from among the dead.

Thirdly, in the gospel is revealed the righteousness of God on the principle of faith.

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith

(or on the principle of faith unto faith); as it is written,

The just shall live by faith (Rom. 1:17).

No doubt it was the gospel of the grace of God, of which Paul testified; but we are told that in it the righteousness of God is revealed. It is God's righteousness. We know that God, in His acting, cannot sacrifice righteousness to love, nor love to righteousness, but works all His counsels according to the unchanging character of His own nature. God must judge sin. He cannot do otherwise, for He

is righteous in all His ways {Psa. 145:17}.

Jesus then magnified the law, and vindicated all the claims of

justice. God condemned sin, and therefore He now justifies the ungodly who believe. Hence we read that

even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21).

In the gospel, then, it is not righteousness demanded from man, nor legal righteousness enforced, but God's righteousness revealed; not God requiring righteousness from man in the way of works for justification, but God bringing righteousness to man, suited to Himself, on the principle of faith. It is, then, not human righteousness, not the righteousness of the law, but

the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21)

which the gospel reveals. It is righteousness wholly apart from law. It is a righteousness suited to God, and our faith is counted as righteousness.

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe (Rom. 3:21, 22).

Scripture then speaks clearly of another righteousness than the one connected with law, and also that the law and the prophets gave testimony to it. Hence we find in the ceremonial law, as it is called, the burnt-offering showed that the worshiper was accepted in its sweet savor --

It shall be accepted for him {Lev. 1:4};

and the prophet Habakkuk, as we have quoted, declared that

the just shall live by his faith {Rom. 1:17; see Hab. 2:4},

showing that life and acceptance in another were contemplated by the law and the prophets, not on the principle of law-keeping, but on the principle of faith. David also, who lived under the law, wrote of

the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Rom. 4:6-8).

Again we find, some hundreds of years before the law was given, that Abram was accounted righteous on the principle of faith. We read that

he believed in Jehovah; and he counted it to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:6).

Abel also, by his more excellent sacrifice obtained witness that he was righteous; and we find, that Noah became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. It is unquestionable then that a righteousness which was of God, and wholly apart from law, was reckoned to believers long before the law was given; that it was gloried in by the faithful who lived under the law; and that it is now revealed in the gospel, and is toward all and upon all them that

believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from [among] the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:23-25).

Another point which Scripture brings before us, is God's righteousness in forgiving the sins of those who believed before the sacrifice of Christ. God, having now set forth Christ

as a propitiation (mercy-seat) through faith in His blood, declares His righteousness in passing by the sins of Old Testament saints. His forbearance had been shown at the time, but now His righteousness in having done so is declared; for the atoning work of Christ, though then not accomplished, must have been always present to the eye of God.

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus (Rom. 3:25, 26).

And further, when Jesus was bearing our sins on the tree, we know that there was unsparingly poured out upon Him all that justice could inflict in the condemnation of sin; as He said, The Son of man must be lifted up. Yes, it *must* be, because the righteous claims of God demanded just punishment for our sins. On this account, He was numbered with the transgressors, and bare our sins in His own body on the tree. Hence He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities. He was oppressed, afflicted, stricken; above all, it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, to put Him to grief, to forsake Him; so that He cried out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1}

What all these atoning sufferings were, and the travail of soul that He passed through, no creature can comprehend, no tongue can tell. We know that His soul was made an offering for sin, and that

He hath poured out His soul unto death {Isa. 53:12}.

Oh, the untold depths of agony and suffering which that blessed One so lovingly and willingly endured for us! Let us ponder what God has revealed of

the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}

till our souls are melted, and peace fills every corner of our hearts! How loudly the atoning death of Jesus speaks to us of the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21, 22)! Though He was the righteous One, yet He endured all the righteous vengeance due to sin in His own self on the cross, and completely drained the cup of wrath, so that He could say,

It is finished {John 19:30}.

Thus in His death the wages of sin were fully dealt out, for He died for our sins according to the Scriptures {1 Cor. 15:3}.

He died unto sin once. All the demands of righteousness were fully met, and peace was made. There righteousness and peace kissed each other. How then was it possible that He should be holden of death? The debt having been justly cancelled, how could the prisoner be longer detained?

Again we see the righteousness of God in raising Him from among the dead. The Savior having made a just atonement for our sins, having satisfied divine justice and glorified God, was it not a righteous thing that He should be raised from among the dead? Having brought eternal glory to God in the stupendous work of the cross, was it not a righteous thing that He should be exalted and glorified? Hence we hear Him saying,

Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him (John 13:31, 32).

And again,

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was (John 17:4, 5).

This demand we know was granted, and we are sure that He was righteously entitled to be glorified as man. Hence we read elsewhere: He was

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, [that is, on account of His so glorifying God in His death on the cross,] God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:8-11).

Thus not only is the man Christ Jesus righteously raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God, having received a name that is above every name, (there being made Lord and Christ,) but He is righteously entitled to Lordship over heavenly, earthly, and infernal beings -- universal dominion, not only by reason of His personal glory as the Son, but because of the infinite worth of the work of the cross. Hence, when He takes unto Himself His great power and reigns, He will do so as righteously entitled to it in virtue of His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. He will then judge both the living and the dead, and put all enemies under His feet; for to this end Christ hath died and risen again, that He might rule over both dead and living.

But more than this. It is because, in marvelous grace, Christ died for our sins under the righteous judgment of God that we have remission -- that God can and does in righteousness forgive us.

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins {1 John 1:9};

for we have forgiveness through the blood. How could God in righteousness condemn our sins in the person of His own Son, and afterwards condemn them on us? Impossible; the idea would accuse God of injustice. But, blessed be His name, in virtue of the atoning work He justifies us --

Being now justified by His blood {Rom. 5:9}.

Is it not due to Christ, just to Him, whose blood was shed for many for the remission of sins, that God should forgive us, and manifest the full outflow of His love in justifying the believer from all things? This, we know, He does. Oh, how forcible and assuring are the words,

It is God that justifieth {Rom. 8:33}!

Instead of God condemning us, He now justifies us, and declares that He is

just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus {Rom. 3:26}.

Precious words of comfort! Thus we see that the gospel reveals the righteousness of God (Rom. 3:21, 22) in justifying us,

who believe in Him, as due to Christ,

who was delivered for *our* offences, and was raised again for *our* justification {Rom. 4:25}.

And yet further, He, who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him -- Christ Himself our righteousness. When the father fell upon the neck of the repentant prodigal, and imprinted on his cheek the kiss of love, he said to his servants,

Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him {Luke 15:22}.

It was the best robe. There could be nothing superior to it. It was the highest possible character of fitness for the father's presence. But the illustration fails to convey the full blessedness of the righteousness, which every believer now is in Christ, for He is not only graced for the Father's presence, but has acceptance in another -- the Beloved -- so that we are become

the righteousness of God in Him {2 Cor. 5:21}.

It is due to Christ, in virtue of His God-glorifying work of obedience, that those for whom He suffered should be accounted righteous in Him --

the Lord our righteousness {Jer. 23:6}

-- according to the eternal purpose. God in His grace has therefore made Him to be unto us "righteousness," and this on the principle of faith. How could Christ see

of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied {Isa. 53:11},

if this were not so, if we were not with Him in glory? Besides, His work was not only for the glory of God, but for *us*. He

once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring *us* to God {1 Pet. 3:18}.

We are not then ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish our own righteousness, but have gladly submitted ourselves unto the righteousness of God. Having found all our righteousnesses as filthy rags, and all hope of righteousness by law-keeping having come to an end, we are rejoiced to find that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4). There is no solid peace in souls until they see the justice or righteousness of God in giving remission of sins through His blood, and counting them righteous in Christ. How blessedly the gospel reveals the righteousness of God!

The righteousness of God {Rom. 3:21, 22}

thus revealed in the gospel is presented in contrast with

the righteousness of the law {Rom. 8:4},

and, as we have said, is entirely apart from it. It flows to us from the sovereign grace of God through the accomplished work of His Son, and is upon all them that believe. How sweet it is to know that Christ glorified is our righteousness, that through matchless grace we are become the righteousness of God in Him. Christ then is our subsisting righteousness in God's presence. The ever-present witness there, not only that all our sins have been righteously atoned for, but that He is of God made unto us righteousness. What rest of heart this gives! What boldness too in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world! Who can condemn whom God justifies? How these truths melt our hearts, and draw us out in worship

and thanksgiving! What comfort too they give in darkest circumstances! It is no marvel that so many have found the true expression of their souls in such lines as these --

"Without one thought that's good to plead,
Oh, what could shield me from despair
But this: 'Though I am vile indeed,
The Lord my righteousness is there'?"

Fourthly, the gospel is God's power unto salvation. (Rom. 1:16). We say, with reverence, that in no other way could God's power be put forth to save sinners; for apart from the accomplished work of the person of the Son, He can only judge sinners, and must be against sinners; but in the death and blood-shedding of Jesus, God shows that He hates sin, but loves sinners, and is able to save the worst of sinners. The apostle Paul therefore gloried in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and was not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes. It brings salvation to Jew and Gentile on the principle of faith, though in point of order it was preached to the Jew first.

Observe then that the gospel is preached for salvation, not to improve man in the flesh, but to save him; not to help the efforts of nature religiously, but to bring him to God; for the obedience of faith, not *of* all nations, but *among* all nations. It is not therefore preached to better the world, nor to convert the world, but it is the power of God unto salvation to individuals,

to every one that believeth {Rom. 1:16}.

Now the power of God unto salvation is very specific in its meaning -- a large expression; for while the freeness of the grace of God is shown in its blessing to every one that believes, fulness is set forth in not stopping short, in its blessing, of planting the saved one bodily in the presence of God in heavenly glory. We know that we are

called unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 5:10),

and that He

suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18).

Not but that it is quite correct now to speak of believers as "saved," for we have the salvation of our souls now by faith, as Scripture says,

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls {1 Pet. 1:9}.

But we wait for salvation in its full sense,

The redemption of our body {Rom. 8:23},

the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time {1 Pet. 1:5},

when, in spiritual bodies, suited to heavenly and eternal glory, and conformed to the image of the Son, we shall be in full possession and enjoyment of this great salvation.

The gospel then is the power of God unto *salvation*, because in the cross of Christ the foundation was laid in righteousness for its accomplishment, according to the eternal purpose and grace of God, to give life and righteousness in Christ Jesus to every one that believeth. We have, therefore, by the power of God in the gospel, deliverance from the wrath to come, remission of sins, present possession of eternal life,

justification by the blood of Christ, peace with God, sonship, the gift of the Holy Ghost, hope of glory, and much more. As the Father has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, we wait for God's Son from heaven; for then we shall know the full power of God to us in this great salvation. Our hope then is glory. We do not hope for righteousness, for, as we have seen, the gospel reveals that Christ is our righteousness; but we hope for that, to which righteousness established in the accomplished work of Jesus entitles us, even glory.

We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith {Gal. 5:5}.

We look for the Savior who shall change this body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working, whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself {Phil. 3:20, 21}. Then "salvation" will be fully consummated; and in this sense we can say,

Now is our salvation nearer [not surer] than when we believed {Rom. 13:11};

because, as time rolls on, it hastens the blissful period of our Lord's return. It will not then be only salvation from the guilt and dominion of sin, the salvation of the soul, and deliverance from the wrath to come; but salvation from this old creation and its belongings, from a body of frailty and infirmity, for we shall be changed in a moment, and bodily translated into the presence of God and the Lamb for ever. Then, in uncreated light, we shall see His face; then we shall realise fully what we now apprehend so feebly, and sound forth so faintly, that the gospel

is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth {Rom. 1:16}.

"My hope is built on nothing less
Than Christ the Lord my righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame;
But wholly lean on Jesus' name;
On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand."

The Resurrection of Christ

Who . . . was raised again for our justification {Rom. 4:25}.

All Christians are agreed that the death of Christ is the basis of all our blessings. Of this there can be no doubt, for

without shedding of blood is no remission {Heb. 9:22}.

Without the death of Christ we could never be with Him:

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone {John 12:24}.

He could not then, but in virtue of the death of the cross, have us in glory with Him: But, while all our present and eternal blessings are founded on the death and blood-shedding of Jesus the Son of God, Scripture points us again and again to Christ risen and ascended, as the One *in* whom we stand, and *are* fully blessed and accepted.

The use so often made of the apostle's resolve

not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified {1 Cor. 2:2},

as if he meant that he confined his preaching to the fact that Christ died for sinners, is very far wide of the truth. As a matter of certainty we know that he preached much more than this. The truth is that in Corinth, where human wisdom was so much extolled, and human righteousness so ardently contended for by the Jews, the apostle determined, that instead of regarding either, he would continually have a crucified Savior before him and minister Him. For he saw in the rejected and crucified Son of God the worthlessness both of human wisdom and human righteousness. He beheld in the cross the divine estimate of man in the flesh. Whether it be a question of man's righteousness or wisdom, he saw both alike laid low there by the righteous judgment of God. In the crucified Savior he knew that God had entirely and judicially set aside man in the flesh;

as Scripture says,

Our old man is crucified with Him {Rom. 6:6}.

The crucified Son of God must therefore be the abiding witness that the "wisdom" of the one, and the "righteousness" of the other, had equally rejected Him, who is

the wisdom of God and the power of God {see 1 Cor. 1:24};

and must also constantly set forth that man had there been judged by God, as utterly unfit for Him, so that

no flesh should glory in His presence {1 Cor. 1:29}.

The apostle then was taught by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ to have no confidence in the pretended good qualities of the natural man. So that when he entered Corinth he determined neither to recognize the boasted wisdom of the Gentile, nor the pretended righteousness of the Jew; for he had a crucified Savior before him, the Holy One of God, hated and rejected by both. He would be occupied with the cross, not only as manifesting God's love to man, but as setting forth God's verdict on the thorough depravity and incurableness of man in the flesh. To imagine that the apostle only preached the death of Christ, foundation as it is of all our blessings, would be contrary to the fact; for we know how largely his ministry entered into the resurrection, ascension, glorification, and coming of Christ, and many details also concerning each of these glorious truths.

It is a brief consideration of what Scripture teaches about the resurrection of our Lord Jesus, which, as the Lord may help, is now to engage our attention. It is the all-important truth of the gospel. We read of the disciples being enveloped

in mist and perplexity, because

as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He *must* rise again from the dead (John 20:9).

Notwithstanding the present extensive amount of Bible knowledge, and acquaintance with the facts and literal details of Scripture, it may, however, be truly said that the children of God are suffering much through

lack of knowledge.

As in the last days of Israel's history the prophet had dolefully to exclaim,

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6),

it may now be truly said that God's people are immense losers through lack of knowledge of Christ. For who now delights to tell of the comfort, victory, and blessings they *enjoy*, from having to do with Christ risen, ascended, and coming? The highest blessing many appear to think that they can know here is present forgiveness of sins, and the consequence is, they become associated and entangled with much that is contrary to the Lord's mind, and injurious to their own souls; which those who have a better acquaintance with Christ avoid, because they perceive another path laid open by the Scriptures to the true followers of the Lord Jesus.

As we have seen, the error of the disciples was from ignorance of the Scriptures, as to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Their hearts were true and fervent, but they were sad, and looking in the wrong direction for comfort, because they *knew not the Scripture*

that He *must*, rise again from the dead {John 20:9}.

They knew not that

it behoved Christ to suffer, and to *rise from* [among] *the dead*, the third day {Luke 24:46}.

The consequence was that they were looking into the sepulcher, and were sadly disappointed because they found not the body of the Lord Jesus, instead of rejoicing in the reality of His mighty victory. They knew not that it was absolutely necessary that He *must rise* again from the dead. Had His body remained in the sepulcher, what assurance could we have had of His having redeemed us? Nay, more, had He been holden of death, we should have had no Savior, and no salvation. The resurrection of Christ is, therefore, the fundamental truth of the gospel. To take away the truth of the Lord's resurrection is to remove all hope -- to leave the soul without hope. Hence we find Peter, after his disappointment at the sepulcher, blessing God for having

begotten us again unto a lively [or living] *hope* by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from [among] the dead (1 Pet. 1:3).

When some sought to persuade the saints of Corinth that there was no resurrection of the dead, the apostle at once refers to the resurrection of Christ, and asserts that, if He be not raised from the dead, then we have no gospel, no comfort, no salvation. He says, if Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, we are false witnesses, ye are yet in your sins, all who have believed are perished, and we are of all men most miserable. Thus the fundamental truth of the gospel

is asserted in connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and our resurrection, too, is affirmed, because there is one Man who has passed through death, and become the First-fruits of them that slept.

In looking through the Acts, when the Lord's servants were so much under the guidance and power of the Holy Ghost, we cannot fail to be struck with the prominence the apostles gave to the truth of the Lord's resurrection. In the first chapter of that book, before the Holy Ghost came, when they were exercised about the choice of an apostle, Peter insists that one must be a witness with us of *His resurrection*. And the sermon on the day of Pentecost not only exposes the guilt of the Jews in slaying Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God, but it also sets forth His *resurrection* from the dead, and declares that He is now in glory made Lord and Christ, the true object of faith, and the Giver of the Holy Ghost. In Acts 3, Peter again addressing the guilty Jews, says, Ye

denied the holy One and the Just . . . and killed the Prince of life, whom *God raised from* [among] *the dead*; whereof we are witnesses {Acts 3:14, 15}.

In Acts 4, we find that the people were grieved, and persecuted the apostles, because they

preached through Jesus *the resurrection from* [among] *the dead* {Acts 4:2};

and when Peter addressed them about the miracle he had wrought on the lame man, he said,

By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom *God raised from* [among] *the dead*, even by Him doth this man stand before you whole {Acts 4:10}.

In the same chapter, after waiting upon God in united prayer, we are told, among other manifestations of divine mercy,

With great power gave the apostles witness of *the resurrection of the Lord Jesus* {Acts 4:33}.

In Acts 5, Peter witnesses again to the people that

the God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God *exalted with His right hand* to be a Prince and a Saviour {Acts 5:30, 31}.

In Acts 7, Stephen says,

I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing *on the right hand of God* {Acts 7:56}.

In Acts 10, when Peter preaches to the household of Cornelius, speaking of the Jews, he says,

Whom they slew and hanged on a tree; Him *God raised up the third day*, and shewed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him *after He rose from* [among] *the dead* {Acts 10:39-41}.

In the account of Paul's famous sermon at Antioch, he again and again insists upon the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. After alluding to the rulers of Jerusalem, who desired Pilate that He should be slain, he said,

They took Him down from the tree, and laid Him in a sepulchre. But *God raised Him from* [among] *the dead*, and He was seen many days {Acts 13:29, 31}.

Again, he tells his hearers that

He raised Him up from [among] the dead, no more to return to corruption {see Acts 13:34}.

He further adds, that

He, *whom God raised again*, saw no corruption {Acts 13:37}.

After this, when preaching at Thessalonica (Acts 17) Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and *risen again from [among] the dead* {Acts 17:2, 3};

and his great offence to the Thessalonians seems to have been in saying “that there is another king, one Jesus.” At Athens, also, we are told that some thought Paul was a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached unto them *Jesus and the resurrection*, and others mocked when they heard of *the resurrection of the dead*. In Paul’s speech of defense at Jerusalem, he says,

Of the *hope and resurrection of the dead* I am called in question (Acts 23:6);

and before Felix, he not only asserts that there *will be a resurrection of the dead*, both of the just and of the unjust, but repeats what he had said on a former occasion,

Touching *the resurrection of the dead*, I am called in question by you this day {Acts 24:21}.

So prominently was the doctrine of the resurrection set forth by Paul, that when Festus takes upon himself to explain Paul’s case, he says, his accusers

had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one *Jesus, which was dead*, whom Paul affirmed to be *alive* (Acts 25:19).

Before King Agrippa also he says that he witnessed

none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that He should be *the first that should rise from the dead*, &c. (Acts 26:23).

All these quotations plainly show, that, when the Holy Ghost was acting in mighty power with the apostles, they not only preached the death of Christ, but that the precious truth of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was largely set forth in their ministry; and the more we consider the subject by the testimony of Scripture, the more convinced we shall be, not only that the resurrection is the fundamental truth of the gospel, but that those souls must be in a defective state who are always, as they say, at the foot of the cross. That ministry too of the word falls far short of the Lord’s mind, which does not enter upon the resurrection of Christ, and the glorious doctrines of divine teaching associated with it, such as the gift of the Holy Ghost, and hope of our Lord’s coming.

The truth is that, if Christ be not raised from the dead, then death has gained the victory over Him, the grave has closed upon Him, Satan has triumphed, and we have no living Savior, and no salvation. The subject therefore is of vital importance. But, blessed be God, Christ is risen from among the dead! He is alive again, and that for evermore, and has the keys of hell [hades] and of death; He has obtained the victory for us, and is become the First-fruits of them that slept.

The apostle Paul tells us that the gospel which he preached

was that which he also received,

how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3, 4).

Every sacrifice which was offered set forth figuratively the death of Jesus. From Abel’s offering downward, the Lamb of God was typically portrayed. In those types and shadows, God declared what He would do, when the time fully came for it, in the death and blood-shedding of His beloved Son. The very kind of death He would undergo in being hanged on a tree was also pointed out in Scripture. In the twenty-second Psalm we hear Him saying,

They pierced my hands and my feet {Psa. 22:16};

and the prophet Zechariah declares that the Jews will yet look on Him whom they pierced, and shall mourn for Him as one morneth for his only son, &c. Moses also refers to it, by informing us that being hanged on a tree was connected with being made a curse,

for he that is hanged is accursed of God {Deut. 21:23}.

When an inspired apostle comments on this he tells us, first, that

as many as are of the works of the law are under the *curse*: for it is written, *Cursed* is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them {Gal. 3:10}.

Thus he proves all under the law to be justly exposed to the *curse* of God. Then he insists on the precious truth that

Christ hath redeemed us from *the curse of the law*.

How? By

being made a curse for us;

and refers to Scripture for authority, saying,

For it is written, *Cursed* is every one that hangeth on a tree {Gal. 3:13}.

And more; for those who thus came under the curse were to be *buried*. It was ordered that the body was to be taken down and buried that day.

His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou, shalt in any wise bury him that day (for he that is hanged is accursed of God) (Deut. 21:23).

Thus we see that

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried {1 Cor. 15:3}

But it may be inquired, Where, in the Old Testament Scriptures, to which we presume the apostle here referred, are we taught that Christ would rise again from the dead on the third day?

The resurrection of Christ was plainly foretold by David in Psa. 16, which was quoted both by Peter on the day of Pentecost, and by Paul at Antioch, to prove the fulfilment of Scripture in His rising again from the dead. They argued that David did not then speak of himself; for, though a prophet, he was buried and saw corruption; but that He, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. In death His soul was not left in hades, the place of departed spirits, neither did His body see corruption; but He entered upon resurrection, the path of life, and ascended to the right hand of God. The words are,

Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me *the path of life*; in thy presence is fulness of joy, at *thy right hand* there are pleasures for evermore (Psa. 16:10, 11).

Thus the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was plainly foretold, and the instruction is clear that Messiah would not only rise again from among the dead, but be exalted to the

right hand of the Majesty on high {Heb. 1:3}.

But with regard to the third day in Scripture, which would seem often significant of resurrection, we are not so plainly instructed; and yet, to the spiritual mind, little doubt can remain that the third day would be the day of Christ's rising from the dead. Abraham seeing the place afar off for the sacrifice of Isaac on the third day (Gen. 22:4), makes it more than probable that Isaac was loosed from the altar on the third day. But this is not clear enough to be relied on as positive evidence on the point. Our Lord Himself referred to Jonah as a type, when He said,

As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth (Matt. 12:40).

Here we have the clearest instruction that the Old Testament record of Jonah did typically set forth the resurrection of Christ, forasmuch as Jonah, after this, was vomited out by the fish on dry land. The third day is also stamped with the divine mark of resurrection by the prophet Hosea --

After two days He will revive us; in the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight (Hos. 6:2).

Again, we find in reference to the peace-offering, that

the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire (Lev. 7:17),

that is, that it shall be entirely for God on the third day.

But the third day was also most remarkably and divinely stamped at creation. Before that day the waters of death covered everything; but on that day the waters receded, and out of the dry land sprang forth living, fruitful things.

The earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind {Gen. 1:12}.

And we are *twice* told on this day, and on this day only, that

God saw that it was good {Gen. 1:12}.

And what could this be for, but to teach us that the third day, the day of life springing out of death, was good not only as to creation, but also as to resurrection? Thus, without question, the Old Testament Scriptures did mark the third day as specially connected with resurrection.

We refer only to another ancient type, to show that the resurrection of our blessed Lord,

the First-fruits of them that slept {1 Cor. 15:20},

would be on the first day of the week; for the sheaf of first-fruits to be accepted for the people was to be waved before Jehovah on the morrow after the Sabbath.

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the

first-fruits of your harvest unto the priest; and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord to be accepted for you, on the *morrow after the Sabbath* [the day after the seventh day] the priest shall wave it (Lev. 23:10, 11).

From all these Scriptures, we cannot fail to enter somewhat into the apostle's meaning, when he said that Christ

rose again the third day according to the Scriptures {1 Cor. 15:4};

and we can also perceive the serious mistake, and consequent perturbation of the minds of the disciples, because

as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He *must* rise again from the dead {John 20:9}.

But how great their joy was when they saw their *risen* Lord, and could understand something of the mighty victory which He had accomplished for them!

The apostle, however, asserts the fact, that

now is Christ risen from [among] the dead, and become the First-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then the end (1 Cor. 15:20-24).

And here we do well to notice,

1st. That the resurrection of Christ is the divine demonstration of *the person of the Son of God*, the foundation truth of Christianity; for He was

declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4).

It also confirmed the truth of His own testimony to His personal glory, when He said,

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

But He spake of the temple of His body. When therefore He was risen from [among] the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them (John 2:19-22).

2nd. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus overcame *death*, and showed that though He died for the ungodly as an offering for sin, yet having laid down His life and lain in the sepulcher till the third day, (thus showing the reality of His death), it could detain Him no longer. It was not possible that He should be holden of death, for He was

the life {John 11:25, 14:6},

the Prince of life {Acts 3:15},

and

He . . . saw no corruption {Acts 13:37}.

That great and terrible foe, which we have because we are sinners, Christ triumphed over in His resurrection from the dead. It is because of this that it is not now absolutely necessary that we should die. Instead of this, we are told that

we shall *not all sleep* {1 Cor. 15:51},

but some of us will be

alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord {1 Thess. 4:15},

and then, instead of dying, we shall be changed in a moment, our mortal bodies will put on immortality, and we shall be for ever like the Lord, and with the Lord. Thus the Lord vanquished *death* in His resurrection from among the dead.

3rd. He triumphed over the *grave*. Covered as the mouth of the sepulcher was with a great stone, and a seal set upon it, guarded too with soldiers, all could not prevent the Son of God rising out of it. And be it observed that this, the greatest victory ever obtained, was wrought noiselessly. No flourish of trumpets announced this wondrous triumph. The sepulcher was left in perfect order, the linen clothes carefully put by, and the napkin that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. The whole scene tells us of the most perfect order and quiet. Had He still been in the sepulcher, the grave would have obtained a victory over Him. But, blessed be God, it was not so; and now looking at the triumphant risen One, we can truthfully say,

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory
{1 Cor. 15:55}?

and know that all His victory is ours, by God's free gift in the depth of His abounding mercy; so that we can also say,

But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 15:57}.

4th. *Satan* no doubt thought, when Christ was nailed to the cross, and the power of death let loose upon Him, so that He bowed His sacred head in death, and gave up the ghost, that the Lord was then made an end of, and got rid of. And to the eyes of those who had said,

Not this man, but Barabbas {John 18:40},

it so appeared. Such, however, was not the fact. Instead of Satan, who had the power of death, triumphing over Jesus, Jesus triumphed over him. He rose victoriously out of death, and not only destroyed death, but

him that had the power of death, that is, the devil
{Heb. 2:14}.

The blessed Son of God thus raised from the dead spoiled principalities and authorities, made a show of them publicly, leading them in triumph by it; He led captivity captive, ascended into glory, received gifts for men, and is henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool.

5th. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is also God's public attestation to His *finished work* upon the tree. If in the cry,

It is finished {John 19:30},

it is implied that every thing had been then accomplished according to the purpose and grace of God, every type fulfilled, every Scripture obeyed, all the stern demands of justice satisfied, righteousness established, and all the claims of holiness met, so that nothing more remained to be done, all was fully responded to, by God, in raising Him from among the dead. If it had been possible that one sin which He bore had been unjudged, He could not have been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. But now we do see Him crowned with glory and honor, who had been numbered with the transgressors and forsaken by God. We now behold Him righteously welcomed to the place of highest exaltation, instead

of being abandoned in unsparing wrath because our sins were upon Him. Thus His being raised from the dead by the glory of the Father is the best possible proof, that, in bearing our sins, He had perfectly satisfied God. He was

obedient unto death, *even the death of the cross*. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him {Phil. 2:8, 9}.

The resurrection of Christ, therefore, is the undeniable proof of His finished work, that sin has been fully judged, and God glorified; for He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. How clear and decided is the testimony of the Holy Ghost on this point. Oh the marvelous blessedness of God being now the Justifier, and the Assurer to us that we

are justified from all things {Acts 13:39}!

6th. Christ having triumphed over death, and gone up the path of life, He has made *a new and living way* for us. When He poured out His soul unto death upon the cross, we are told that

the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom {Matt. 27:51; Mark 15:38}.

Thus a new and living way was consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh. But after this He rose from the dead and entered into heaven itself by His own blood. He rose from the dead as the

First-fruits {1 Cor. 15:20-23}

because others are to rise from among the dead; and He went into heaven as the Forerunner, because other runners are to follow. What never-ending blessedness God has given us in a risen, victorious Savior! Well may we sing --

"His be the Victor's name,
Who fought the fight alone;
Triumphant saints no honour claim:
His conquest was their own.

"Bless, bless the Conqueror slain!
Slain in His victory;
Who lived, who died, who lives again,
For thee, His church, for thee!"

7th. In Christ risen we see Him, who was dead, alive again, and that for evermore, and know that God has, in the riches of His grace, *given us life in Him*.

God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son
{1 John 5:11}

-- a new life surely, risen life, the Spirit of life in Christ, life in One who is beyond death, the mighty Conqueror of Satan, death, and the grave. He, who is now in the very glory of God, is then our life. Hence we are spoken of as

risen with Christ {Col. 3:1},

having been quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. What a marvelous blessing to be quickened and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and to be thus associated in life with One who has risen triumphantly out of death, and sat down on the right hand of God! What liberty as well as gladness it gives us! How natural therefore it is because of this, that we should be enjoined to seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, to set our mind on things above, and not on

things on the earth. And these surely must be the exercises of risen-life in us, for its associations are above, its proper element is where Christ sitteth. Were this more practically the case with us, how familiar should we be with the things which are above; and how careful we should be not to be occupied with earthly things beyond our necessary duties! We should enjoy

the holiest of all {see Heb. 10:19, read Heb. 9:6 – 10:22}

as our proper dwelling place.

The throne of grace {Heb. 4:16}

would assure us of continual access with confidence; while we read our unchanging title to glory in

the blood of sprinkling {Heb. 9:11-15, 12:24}.

The risen and ascended Man in the glory would be the constant object that attracts, commands, and satisfies our hearts. We should be joyfully contemplating Him as our life, righteousness, peace, and hope. His various offices too on our behalf in the glory, as our

High Priest {Heb. 4:14},

Advocate {1 John 2:1},

Washer of our feet,

Shepherd and Bishop of our souls {see 1 Pet. 2:25},

are enough to fill us with overflowing consolation and refreshment. While holding the Head, from whom all blessings flow to every member of the body, we should be in communion with Him in His present work on earth. Contemplating Him also as

Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10},

we are reminded by the Spirit that, if He is above every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, we *are complete in Him*. These and many more lines of precious instruction must occupy our souls, if we are seeking the things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Many saints are already with Him there --

absent from the body, and present with the Lord {see 2 Cor. 5:8}.

Like us, they are looking forward to His coming, when He, who rose so victoriously over death, will apply His resurrection power to our bodies, and then all who are in Christ, whether dead in Christ or alive on the earth, will be brought together in resurrection-life and glory to be

for ever with the Lord {see 1 Thess. 4:17}.

If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from [among] the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from [among] the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you (Rom. 8:11).

“And when I in thy likeness shine,
The glory and the praise be Thine,
That everlasting joy is mine,
O Lamb of God, in Thee!”

In Christ, And The Flesh in Us

I knew a man in Christ (2 Cor. 12:2).

Such is the Christian. Through infinite grace he is no longer before God in his sins and in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. He *was*

without Christ {Eph. 2:12},

he *is*

in Christ (2 Cor. 12:2),

he *will be*

like Christ {see Phil. 3:21}.

A Christian, then, is not one who hopes to be, but one who is in Christ. A man may be much reformed, and not in Christ. He may be earnestly taken up with religiousness, yet not in Christ. He may even be convicted, yet not converted. Those who stop short of Christ are still in their sins. To be in Christ is to be the workmanship of God -- a new creation. Such have died with Christ, and are alive to God in Christ. It is an entirely new condition and standing. All is of God. The old things have passed away; all things have become new. Whatever, therefore, a man may think of himself, whatever changes may have been wrought in his outward deportment, or however esteemed he may be by others, he has no authority for calling himself a Christian, if he is not

in Christ.

Nor is it correct to say that those who are in Christ were always in Christ, as some have asserted, because they confound purpose and redemption. We are told that we were all

by nature the children of wrath, even as others {Eph. 2:3}.

The apostle seems gladly to acknowledge that he knew some who had been brought into this marvelous character of blessing prior to himself. He says,

Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen . . . who also were in Christ before me (Rom. 16:7).

As to the purpose of God, we know that all those who compose the church of God were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is also clear that redemption, though accomplished more than eighteen hundred years ago, is only the present blessing of those who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and believed in the Son of God. Before that we were afar off;

but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

Of such, too, it is truly written,

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7).

No one, then, can be spoken of in a Scriptural sense as in Christ Jesus, before he has received Him, as his Savior, who

was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification {Rom. 4:25}.

Before he was made alive (quicken) he was dead in trespasses and in sins -- in the flesh; but, through a, divinely-wrought faith in the Son of God, he has received eternal life, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He is associated with Christ in life, and by the Holy Ghost he is one with Him. This, too, he is entitled to know and to rejoice in, as Jesus said,

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you (John 14:20).

In the apostles' days, persons were accredited as being in Christ,

and they were spoken of, and written to, as such. For instance, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is addressed

to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus {1 Cor. 1:2};

and the letter to the Philippians,

to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi {Phil. 1:1},

thus showing that saints in those days were ordinarily recognized as

in Christ Jesus.

The truth is that the epistles describe men as either

in the flesh {Rom. 7:5, 8:8},

or as

in Christ Jesus.

The natural man, however cultivated or refined, however outwardly religious and benevolent, is nevertheless "in the flesh," as to his state before God. He is in the first Adam, and dead in sins. He needs spiritual life. This is why the gospel presents no thought as to mending or improving men in the flesh; on the contrary, it speaks of redemption, that is, taking out of a state of guilt and condemnation, and bringing into a position of blessing and nearness to God. For, however polished and amiable people appear, we are assured that

the carnal mind is enmity against God {Rom. 8:7}

-- the will is in opposition to God. Thus man naturally, however intellectual and generous, is only

a corrupt tree, which cannot bring forth good fruit {see Matt. 7:18}.

Neither law nor terrors, commandments nor judgments, make him fit for God. His whole history shows the opposition of his will to God's will, and exhibits the truth of the divine sentence,

They that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).

A verdict sweeping indeed, but most just, and unmistakably plain and conclusive. Such is man! He

receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because

they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

Under these circumstances, as before observed, God has not proposed to mend the corrupt nature; but, in His infinite grace, has brought in redemption in Christ, and through His blood. In this way we have deliverance from guilt, condemnation, and the dominion of sin, and are before God on an entirely new standing in life and righteousness.

The sense of guilt has been cleared in divine grace, by the blood of Jesus the Son of God; who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, suffered for our sins, and died for our sins under the judgment of God. Thus all our need, as to sins and guilt, has been fully met in righteousness, and all who believe are justified by His blood, justified from all things. Instead, then, of guilt we have a purged conscience; for we know that all is now clear between us and God. Our sins and iniquities He will remember no more. Instead of imputing sins, He accounts us righteous, so that we have

no more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2},

are no longer guilty, but justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is God who justifies. We are also delivered from condemnation, because, when law was unable to produce good in us, on account of the unclean and corrupt qualities of our nature, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, condemned our old evil nature --

sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}.

Thus our old man, with its sinful passions and lusts, has been crucified with Christ; we have died with Him, who, in such wondrous grace, was made sin for us; who became our Substitute, and bore that condemnation which was due to us. The whole condemning power of God due to us on account of sin having been poured upon Jesus, there is no condemnation left for us. Hence we are assured,

There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1. See also Rom. 4:22-25; Rom. 6:6-11).

But sin is the master of man naturally -- it has dominion over him. Sin reigns unto death. He is the slave of sin, and cannot free himself. But God in His grace has set the believer free. He has died with Christ, his Substitute. Neither sin nor law can have anything to say to a dead man. He that is dead is set free, or justified from sin.

You cannot charge a dead man with lust. Being their set free from sin, and become an object of divine favor, it is said of such,

Sin shall not have dominion over you for ye are not under the law, but under grace {Rom. 6:14}.

We are delivered, and brought to God. We are become servants to God. What an unutterable difference between being a slave of sin and a servant to God! We are alive to God in Christ, that henceforth we should live, not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us, and rose again. His death has brought us deliverance as well as peace. By it we have been for ever freed from guilt, condemnation, and the dominion of sin. Blessed indeed it is to grasp these precious realities (Rom. 6:22)!

We must not, however, forget that God has not only wrought in His exceeding grace to save us from wrath, but has blessed us agreeably to His own goodness and nature. Nothing less could suit Him than that we should be before Him in love, in conscious nearness and relationship, in eternal glory. He is therefore bringing many sons to glory. Jesus once suffered for sins that He might bring us to God. Redemption is God's way of bringing us to Himself; the wisdom, work, and results are all for His glory, as well as for our eternal blessing. It was necessary, therefore, that the whole question of sin should be settled in righteousness for the glory of God, as well as to meet our need. Atonement was for God; it fully answered the just demands of His throne. In this way God has been glorified, and we have been cleansed, delivered, and brought to God as purged worshippers.

God has also given us life -- a risen and eternal life. It is His own gracious gift. Blessed be God! We read,

God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (1 John 5:11).

It is life in Him who is risen from among the dead, and given to us as a present possession, to be known in activity and power in our souls. God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:12).

Christ, then, is our life, and

the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death {see Rom. 8:2}.

Christ lives in us, and we are in Him. We are then associated with Christ in life -- a risen and eternal life. Hence we are addressed as

risen with Christ {Col. 3:1},

and consequently exhorted to

seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory {Col. 3:1, 4}.

The believer has passed out of death and into life. This transition, Scripture fully recognizes --

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren {1 John 3:14}.

We have also received the gift of the Holy Ghost.

God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father {Gal. 4:6}.

The believer, therefore, is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit -- he is in Christ; he has died out of his old Adam standing, in the death of Jesus, and has been quickened, raised up, and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He has been born of the Spirit, and is indwelt by the Spirit. He has been brought out and brought in. Hence Scripture speaks of us as

accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6},

complete in Him {Col. 2:10},

preserved in Jesus Christ {Jude, verse 1},

and

sanctified in Christ Jesus {1 Cor. 1:2}.

We are a new creation in Him who is Head of all principality and power, are always before God in Christ, in all His acceptability and nearness, and loved by the Father as He loved the Son. This is where redemption has brought us, where divine, perfect love has set us; so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. We have died unto sin, died with Christ, and are alive unto God in Him. Having received remission of sins, we are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, joined to the Lord -- one spirit. This is a man in Christ.

We were in the flesh {Rom. 7:5},

but having died with Christ, and risen with Him, we have eternal life in Him, and are united to Him by the Spirit.

“One spirit with the Lord;”

Oh blessed, wondrous word!

What heavenly light, what power divine,

Doth that sweet word afford.

“One spirit with the Lord;”

The Father’s smile of love

Rests ever on the members here

As on the Head above.”

Oh the marvelous depths and heights of divine grace! Its depths, in embracing us when in our sins and guilt, exposed to the wrath of God; and its heights, in bringing us to God in Christ for everlasting blessing. And so truly does Scripture teach the reality of this translation from being in Adam to our present standing in Christ, that we are now spoken of as

not in the flesh {Rom. 8:9},

not of the world {John 15:19, 17:14, 16},

not under law {Rom. 6:14, 15},

but

in the Spirit {Rom. 8:9},

and

blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ {see Eph. 1:3}.

The important question for us is, How far have we received these truths into our hearts? How far have we mixed faith with the truth of God concerning what He has wrought in Christ? The practical point is, Do we habitually take our place as in Christ when consciously dealing with God? Those who have not received this truth may be trying to work themselves into nearness to God, and be always disappointed, instead of taking, in simple faith, the nearness and acceptance in Christ which His own grace has given us. Those who are working and redoubling their efforts to get near, only prove that they have not yet entered upon the place in Christ in which divine grace has set them. Those who by faith take possession of it rejoice therein, and rest in God’s presence. Such are never so happy as when inside the veil, where the Lord Jesus is. They worship God in the Spirit, and have

fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ {see 1 John 1:3}.

But though the believer is not in the flesh, he sorrowfully finds that the flesh is in him. He learns through humbling

experiences to say,

In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing {Rom. 7:18}.

He does not say, “In me dwells no good,” because he has a new life, and the Holy Ghost in him; but he says,

In me, (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing;

for, though delivered from the Adam standing, he still has the Adam nature -- the flesh, with its passions and lusts -- that evil principle which is ready to serve the law of sin. He has, in fact, two natures: the old nature,

that which is born of the flesh,

which

is flesh;

and the new life, or new nature,

that which is born of the Spirit,

which

is spirit {John 3:6}.

The new nature which is born of the Spirit is strengthened by the Holy Ghost which indwells us; so that, while the flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit is against the flesh in such antagonistic power, that we cannot do the things which we otherwise would. The delivered soul knows that he is the subject of the actings of these two opposing natures; and his conclusion is,

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin (Rom. 7:25).

The great trouble of every believer is not so much what he has done as what he is. It is the painful consciousness of having this evil nature -- pride, self-will, and lust cropping up within, even if they do not come out. And the more his desire to live for the glory of God, the greater his sorrow at the garment being spotted by the flesh. This evil nature is his greatest enemy, his constant opponent, that upon which Satan and the world can act, and which neither time nor circumstances can improve, so desperately wicked is it, and deceitful above all things. The more we are occupied with it, the weaker we are toward it, because it becomes an object in the place of Christ. The secret of power over it is to know that it has been crucified with Christ because of its incurable badness -- to reckon it dead -- to disallow its cravings, and to find all our springs of comfort and strength in Christ glorified -- to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:6-11). In eternal glory we shall not need so to

reckon {Rom. 6:11},

for we shall be completely and for ever delivered from it; but we are to so reckon now, because

the flesh

is still in us. Yet it is equally our privilege to say with the apostle,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I [that is, not the old nature], but Christ [my new life] liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh [that is, in this mortal body], I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

This is Christian life.

To be occupied with what the flesh is in its various activities and deceitful workings, is not to be reckoning it dead; to be regarding it as an antagonistic force to be overcome, is to reckon it living; but to be holding it dead in the death of Christ, as judicially put to death in Christ our Substitute, and to find all our resources in Christ risen and glorified, is to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way we have power over ourselves, and can daily bring forth fruit unto God. The way of faith is always to look at things from God's stand-point, to take sides with Him who regards our old man as having been judicially set aside for ever in the death of Christ, and who always sees us

complete in Him {Col. 2:10},

in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

It is quite true that we are the objects of the continual care and discipline of the Father of spirits. If we walk after the flesh, instead of after the Spirit, this may call for His loving rebuke and chastening; but that in no way interferes with the precious truth of our continual acceptance and standing in Christ, by whose one offering we have been perfected for ever. The fact is that, through grace, we

are not in the flesh, but in Christ {see both Rom. 8:9 and 1 Cor. 1:30},

yet the flesh is in us; but our part is to reckon our old man as having been, before God and to faith, judicially put to death in Christ crucified, and thus to be so constantly occupied with the triumphant Son of God, as to find all our resources, all our strength, all our springs, in Him.

Nor does age, experience, or change of circumstances improve the flesh. It has been truly remarked, that the flesh without law is lawless; put it under law, it breaks law; put it in connection with Christ, and it crucifies Him; let the Holy Ghost be given to man, and the flesh lusts against Him; take a man up into the third heaven, and he is puffed up. It is wholly unimprovable, though its desires and habits, in youth and old age, in affluence or poverty, may show themselves differently. Its principles of lust and wilfulness remain the same. Paul had been in the third heaven, and heard unutterable things, which it is not possible for mortal man to speak. Was the flesh improved in him by such a wondrous change and experience? We are told that he needed

a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him {see 2 Cor. 12:7},

lest he should be exalted because of the exceeding greatness of the revelations. Now surely, when in the glory, we shall not need such a thorn, neither did he when in the third heaven; but afterwards, when among men, there was such tendency to the pride and lust of the flesh being stirred up, that a messenger of Satan was needed to act upon him, as a preventive of fleshly conduct. So deeply distressing and humiliating was this "thorn," that he three times besought the Lord to take it away; but this could not be done, that the servant might not be exalted above measure. Instead of removing it, the Lord said unto him,

My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness {2 Cor. 12:9}.

His path, therefore, for the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage, was to go forward, having no confidence in the flesh, but boasting in his weakness, that the power of Christ might rest upon him; for, said he, when I am weak, then am I strong (2 Cor. 12:10).

How vastly different was the experience of this honored servant of the Lord when in the third heaven, and when buffeted by Satan on earth! But was he not equally secure in Christ, when filled with anguish, or irritation, or other effects of the

thorn in the flesh,

as when hearing the unutterable communications of Paradise? Surely his standing before God in Christ was in no way altered by this remarkable change of circumstances and experience. And it is very important to observe this. For have not most believers their bright times and their dark times? Did not Israel taste the bitterness of Marah, and then realize the delightful change of Elim's palm-trees and wells of water? And do not most of God's children know what it is, on some occasions, to be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and at other times to be in heaviness and distress, having the heart lacerated with the sorrows of the way? But are we not as secure and blessed in Christ, when in the trying path of humiliation and anguish, as when we are happy in the Lord, so near, that it is only the thinnest film which appears to intercept our vision of Himself, and His own glory seems to shine down upon us? Surely it is always true that

ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10},

and that no change of circumstances or experience, whether dark or bright, can in any degree shake our security and standing "in Him"; though it is quite true we may lose the enjoyment of it, if we are taken up with experience, or anything else, in the place of Christ. How wise, then, it is for the believer to abide in the Lord Jesus, to be occupied with Him, for then we have always blessing.

We all, with open face beholding . . . the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

So clearly does Scripture recognize "the flesh," with all its evil capabilities, even in those who are born of God, that they are enjoined to lay aside

all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (1 Pet. 1:23; 2:1, 2).

Here we find persons who are born again instructed how they can grow in grace, &c., and charged not to let these dreadful workings of the old man come out. Again, because we are

risen with Christ (Col. 3:1),

and hope to reign

with Him in glory (Col. 3:4),

we are exhorted thus:

Mortify (or put to death) therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is

idolatry (Col. 3:5)

-- the vile workings of the flesh, the things which the ungodly practice, and which bring down the judgment of God upon them --

For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience (Col. 3:6).

Observe, Scripture nowhere says that we are to crucify the flesh, because our old man has been crucified with Christ, and thus we are said to

have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts {Gal. 5:24};

but, as risen with Christ, and having a new life in Him (though still having the flesh in us), we are so to reckon ourselves dead as not to suffer these things to live in us, because we have died with Christ. Again, therefore, we are enjoined to put off

anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye *have put off* the old man with his deeds; and *have put on* the new (Col. 3:1-12).

Now it is clearly impossible that such injunctions should have been given to those who are born of God and risen with Christ, unless they still have "the flesh" in them, in which is nothing good. Let us turn to another Scripture on this point.

If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live (Rom. 8:13).

This is addressed to those who are said to be "in Christ." Observe, it is not the body which is to be flagellated, or put to death, but the deeds of the body -- those things which the body is capable of doing, which are in opposition to God's mind. Again, notice that the power for this is the Spirit of God; not flesh against flesh, but a new and almighty power given to us, by which we may practically keep in the place of death the workings of "the flesh." Nothing can be found more clearly taught in Scripture than that the believer is "in Christ," who is his life, and one with Christ by the Holy Ghost; and, at the same time, that "the flesh" is in every believer. He is, therefore, a compound of two natures; with one,

the mind,

he serves God's law; and with the other,

the flesh {Rom. 7:25},

sin's law. The indwelling Spirit strengthens the new nature, and keeps us occupied with Christ, our righteousness and strength, so that we may reckon ourselves to have died unto sin, and thus practically hold as dead the buddings forth of "the flesh." May the Lord graciously help us more and more in this! It is important, however, to remember that the knowledge of having "the flesh" in us is of itself no hindrance to

our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ {see 1 John 1:3};

but allowing it to come out practically does hinder it. We have not a bad conscience from its existence in us, because we know that the flesh, or the old man, has been judicially dealt with in the death of Christ. Neither need the believer sin. He is enjoined to sin not, and he has no excuse for sinning,

These things write I unto you that ye sin not {1 John 2:1}.

It is, moreover, not correct for a believer to say sin is not in him, for

if we say that we have no sin

-- not sins, but sin, the corrupt nature, or old man --

we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us {1 John 1:8}.

If, however, the believer does sin, does commit sins, the fruit of the Adam nature, his conscience should be troubled, and his communion with the Father and the Son will be interrupted. It is a question of communion, not of salvation. Provision has graciously been made for it. Christ is our Advocate with the Father concerning it. Self-examination, self-judgment, repentance, and confession are wrought in our souls by the Spirit, and by the application of the word --

the washing of water by the word {Eph. 5:26}

-- we become restored. The advocacy of Christ is based upon propitiation for our sins having been made, and He who takes up our cause is the perfectly righteous One. Hence it is written,

If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only: but also for the whole world (1 John 2:1, 2).

On confessing, we are cleansed perfectly, forgiven in righteousness, on the ground of the sacrifice once offered; so that we are told,

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8-10).

It is not the believer taking the place of a miserable sinner; but a believer taking the place before God of an offending, naughty child, counting on divine faithfulness and justice to forgive his sins because of the sacrifice of Christ, and to cleanse him, and thus to restore him to happy communion. This is the true way of restoring an erring child of God. He may be the weakest and most faulty of God's children; still he is a child, to whom the Lord does not impute sin, and he never can be again, strictly speaking, a miserable sinner, even when feeling the dreadful character of his sin, before God in confession.

Happy indeed are those who are occupied with the personal glory and excellencies, finished work, and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, so as to have always, by the Spirit, the comfort of the Father's love, and the joy of security and completeness in Christ while waiting for His coming! Such can truly say,

Our fellowship (or communion) is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ {1 John 1:3}.

Communion

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee (Ex. 25:22).

The point specially to be noticed here is communion. Enoch had walked with God, and others had believed God; but here God is showing how He can meet man, and have to do with him, in a way suitable to His own infinitely holy nature. He had talked to Adam in the garden. He had made Himself known to Abram as the Almighty, and had come so near to him as not to hide from him the things that He would do. But when He called Israel out of Egypt, He revealed Himself to them as Jehovah. He sheltered them from destruction by the blood of the Lamb, brought them through the Red Sea of death and judgment, and thus perfectly delivered them from their enemies, whom they saw dead upon the sea-shore. In this way, God had a people (though in the flesh) separated unto Himself by election, and by blood, and redeemed by power, so that He could now dwell among them. We read, therefore, in this chapter,

Let them make ME a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them (Ex. 25:8).

And again, when the priests were consecrated, Jehovah said,

This shall be a continual burnt-offering throughout your generations, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, before Jehovah; where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee. And there I will meet with the children of Israel. . . . And *I will dwell among the children of Israel*, and will be their God (Ex. 29:42-45).

And again,

I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people (Lev. 26:12).

Thus Israel is chosen, separated from every other people, redeemed, and blest with Jehovah in their midst; and now we read of His meeting with Moses, and with them. Communion then flows out of established relationships founded on redemption accomplished, and through God's dwelling with His people by His Spirit. All this is clearly set forth in this typical people which God brought out of Egypt, most of whom fell in the wilderness because of their unbelief. With us, all these blessings are of eternal value. By One offering we are perfected for ever {Heb. 10:14}.

The redemption obtained for us is "eternal." We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. We are children of God, and have received the Holy Ghost to abide with us, and in us, "for ever." We are therefore

called unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus {see 1 Pet. 5:10}.

In the verses we have referred to, we find Jehovah teaching what His mind is as to communion. He desired communion with His people –

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee {Ex. 25:22}.

He also teaches on what ground He can meet them.

It was not long before these precious words were communicated to Moses, that mount Sinai had been altogether in a smoke, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire. Then the people were commanded to keep off, and not to come near. There were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; and so terrible was the sight that Moses said,

I exceedingly fear and quake {Heb. 12:21}.

Bounds were set about the mount, so that the people might not breakthrough. It was said,

Whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death: there shall not a hand touch it, but he shall surely be stoned, or shot through; whether it be beast or man it shall not live (Ex. 19:10-21).

But why all this? Because Jehovah came down upon mount Sinai, and demanded righteousness from man in the way of works. He gave a law proper to man as a child of Adam on earth. Holy, just, and good as it was, it was the ministration of death, because it was the ministration of righteousness. It demanded righteousness from man to God on the principle of works. Such was law.

But how different are the words written soon after --

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee.

It is because God, knowing what was in man, that he would be insubject and a law-breaker, was here setting forth what was in His heart toward him; for, though on the principle of law or works, man must always be at a distance from God, yet His own wise and gracious heart could devise the way whereby men on earth and Himself could not only meet together, but have communion. An altar of burnt-offering was at the door of the tabernacle. All our blessings are founded on the sacrifice of Christ. These are some of the beginnings of the unfoldings of Scripture as to the way of grace.

Law then is not grace. They stand in widest contrast with each other. The principles of grace and works are never commingled in Scripture for justification in the sight of God. Hence we read:

If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace: otherwise work is no more work (Rom. 11:6).

The symbol of the mercy-seat was the intimation that God would come out in *grace*, and that even to lawbreakers. This we know has since been freely done; for God has made the way of approach to Himself in the person and work of His own Son, both according to His own holiness and the need of the sinner. The Son of God has come; He has declared the Father. It is well to observe that the Ark was the first vessel of the tabernacle which God commanded to be made, and that the place assigned to it was inside the veil. It therefore sets forth Christ in heaven.

The two qualities of material of which the Ark was composed -- "shittim-wood," and "gold" -- set forth Christ as perfect man, and also truly God. Made flesh and dwelling among us, He nevertheless was the eternal Son -- God and Man in one Person. In this Ark, or chest, the tables of testimony, on which the Ten Commandments were written, were put. The whole was covered by a lid of pure gold (pure gold meaning divine righteousness), out of the ends of which lid, or mercy-seat, were beaten cherubim made to overshadow the mercy-seat, and to look toward each other, and to the mercy-seat. All this clearly sets forth that

grace reigns through righteousness {see Rom. 5:21}.

It foreshadows the precious fact, that, though man was a sinner, and thus justly exposed to the wrath of God, yet that Jesus had glorified God concerning the law. He was the law-fulfiller, as well as the bearer of its curse in the death of the cross, to redeem those who had broken it. Moreover, He magnified the law and made it honorable, and could truly say,

Thy law is within my heart {Psa. 40:8}.

With Him, not one jot or tittle of the law failed. He was obedient in all things. His meat and drink were to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. This He did perfectly. He could therefore say at the close,

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do {John 17:4}.

The believer, who has been under the law, is thus redeemed from the curse of the law, and, having died to it in Jesus his Substitute, is brought to know God in Christ as the Giver of both grace and glory. Like the apostle, he can now say,

I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God {Gal. 2:19}.

It is precious to know that Jesus the Son of God, now in the heavens, is the One who has glorified God as to the law of Moses, and is the true mercy-seat. Thus we see Jesus.

In the directions about the construction of the mercy-seat, the way of our intercourse and communion with God begins to be shadowed forth. But about this, further revelations of God's mind are afterwards given. In this place it is especially seen how law-breakers can be brought to God in peace and blessing, and how God can then have intercourse and communion with them. Afterward, in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, God further reveals that those who come into His presence can only be there in safety by virtue of the cloud of sweet incense covering the mercy-seat, and the blood of the sacrifice sprinkled upon and before the mercy-seat. The incense, no doubt, blessedly set forth the moral excellencies and perfections of the Lord Jesus, who entered into heaven itself by His own blood. The blood upon the mercy-seat was never wiped off; it was the ever-present witness to sins having been judged in the sacrifice, and to the ways of God having been fully vindicated. The blood was only sprinkled once *upon* the mercy-seat, for God knew perfectly the infinite value of the blood of Jesus Christ His Son; but it was sprinkled seven times *before* the mercy-seat, to assure the worshiper of its perfect efficacy for him when thus approaching God. We have now, then, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

The blood gives us title to be there, and we have no other.

It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul {Lev. 17:11}.

We are redeemed not with corruptible things, as silver and gold,

but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot {1 Pet. 1:19}.

After this ordinance on the great day of atonement, God was still further pleased to show us His mind as to the ground of intercourse and communion with Himself. When the Son of God hung, as the spotless sacrifice for sin, upon the tree, and cried out,

It is finished,
and
gave up the ghost {John 19:30},
we are told that

the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51).

The veil, we are taught, symbolized the flesh of Jesus; hence we read,

The veil, that is to say, His flesh {Heb. 10:20}.

As long as the veil was unrent it was a bar of access from man to God; it showed that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. But when the mercy-seat was accessible to all through the rent veil, the way to God was made plain. It is now a fact that an incarnate Savior, Law-fulfiller and Curse-bearer, crucified, risen, ascended and glorified, is known in the presence of God. Man raised from among the dead, and gone into heaven itself by His own blood, is now seen there.

We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9).

What a wonder of divine grace, that God should thus devise a way whereby His banished ones might return, in perfect consistency too with His own holy and righteous demands. It was Jehovah who said,

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel (Ex. 25:22);

but we can say that we are now

justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth a propitiation (or mercy-seat) through faith in His blood (Rom. 2:24, 25).

What a holy and righteous ground has divine grace thus laid for the Father's intercourse with us, and our intercourse with Him. We see sins judged, law fulfilled, its curse borne, God's righteousness fully met, so that He is just both to Christ and to us, in forgiving our sins and giving us access with confidence into His own presence now by faith, with title to be there for ever. Let us not fail to observe that it is not said, There you shall meet with me, but,

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee {Ex. 25:22};

for God's righteous estimate of the work of Jesus is such, that, consistently with every attribute of Himself, He can meet with us and commune with us. What peace and rest this gives to our souls! How similar is the Lord's, last address to the Church on earth, when in its worst phase of profession and indifferentism to His claims:

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, *I will come in to him, and will sup with him*, and he with me {Rev. 3:20}.

It is the Lord who Himself here proposes communion, and expresses Himself as desiring it. He wants to sup with us. Precious grace!

By communion we understand fellowship, or joint participation. Communion and fellowship are generally the same word in the original. Communion, as we have said, must flow out of established peace and relationship; and its measure must be according to the character in which God is known. We do not read of communion with *God* in the epistles, because God is now revealed as *Father*;

the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him {John 1:18}.

Every believer now is born of God, and knows the Father. The Holy Ghost has come down, and has been given as the Spirit of adoption.

Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6).

Thus it is that

our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

The Holy Ghost is the power of this fellowship, hence we read of

the communion of the Holy Ghost {2 Cor. 13:14}.

Thus now, in our measure, we can enter into the Father's love, counsels, delight and rest, in regard to the Son, and to all His children; and can also enter into the Son's love, delight and rest concerning the Father, and concerning every member of His body. It is into this new order of things that we have been introduced through grace, and by

the fellowship of the Spirit {see Phil. 2:1}.

It is most wonderful to contemplate, and yet we can easily see that nothing less could suit the Father, nothing less be suited to the infinite worth of the

eternal redemption {Heb. 9:12}

accomplished by the Son, and nothing less could be wrought in us as children of God by the indwelling Spirit. It is no wonder that the apostle should have added,

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full {1 John 1:4}.

As we have before observed, it is the peace made, the relationships established, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, which give character to the communion from which true service flows. Peace, communion, and service are therefore the divine order. What rest, and joy, and power, too, for service and testimony, are connected with the realization of this present order of fellowship! It is of all importance that our

souls really enter into it; so that we may be consciously before God our Father inside the rent veil, where Jesus is, our life and righteousness, where perfect peace and perfect love are unchangeably known, and the blood ever speaks of our title to be there. There worshipping the Father, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, without a cloud, without a fear, having no confidence in the flesh; there ever learning divine goodness, and increasingly delighting in the Father, who loves us as He loved His Son; and delighting in the Son of God, who loves us, and gave Himself for us. Such are some of the blessednesses of present fellowship with the Father and with the Son.

What saith the reader to these things? Do you enter into and enjoy this present character of communion? Are you at home inside the veil? Is it the happiest place your soul knows? and do you regard it as the suited place for a child of God, now brought into this wondrous fellowship? Liberty of access there we have with confidence, and to come boldly to the throne of grace; but the important question is, What do our souls know of it practically?

The Christian's power for service, and all fruit-bearing, is communion. Jesus said,

Abide in Me {John 15:4};

and again,

Without Me ye can do nothing {John 15:5}:

The moment communion is broken we cease to live as Christians should, and cannot be in a good state till our souls are restored. Hence we find in Scripture that God's people were happy and blest in having to do with the ark or mercy-seat, and quite the reverse when not being near it. As an example of the latter, we have only to turn to 1 Sam. 7:2, where we read,

It came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.

The expression of their unhappy state is most telling, They lamented after the Lord;

they had not the sense of His presence. And more than this; for we may be quite sure, if God our Father has not His right place in our hearts; something else will occupy them; perhaps the surrounding religiousness. It was so in this case; having lost the sense of the presence and blessing of the true God, they were taken up with the strange gods of the nations and Ashtaroth. A sad but true picture of the state of many now, who have no enjoyment of the communion at the mercy-seat we have been considering. Oh the marvel of divine grace!

There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony {Ex. 25:22}.

Surely we can look up and say

"Far from Thee we faint and languish;
Oh, our Savior, keep us nigh!"

If personal intercourse and communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Ghost, be not known by our souls, then other objects will easily engage

our hearts, and we shall be unhappy; not surely giving up the Lord, but, instead of enjoyment, *lamenting after the Lord*. May He graciously keep us abiding in our Lord Jesus inside the veil!

Let us turn to another example. In 2 Sam. 6:11, 12, we find one greatly blessed by the Lord. The ark, or mercy-seat, was in

the house of Obed-edom the Gittite three months: and the Lord blessed Obed-edom, and all his household.

Nor could the blessing be unnoticed, or untalked of, it was so remarkable. We read,

And it was told king David, saying, The Lord hath blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that pertaineth unto him because of the ark of God.

Ah, let no Christian expect the blessing of the Lord in his household, unless the mercy-seat be consciously known and honored there! God's word is,

Them that honor me, I will honor {1 Sam. 2:30}.

If, therefore, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ be called on, honored, and served in our homes, we may surely count not only on our own blessing, but on blessing to all the household. We may rest assured that neither individual nor family blessings will be wanting, if Christ in heaven, the true mercy-seat, be the daily object of our souls, and honored by us.

Toward the end of this same chapter, we find also an encouraging example of collective joy and blessing, among those who knew the ark or mercy-seat to be the great center of attraction. The ark of the Lord, or mercy-seat, was brought up with shouting, the sound of the trumpet, and with gladness. Burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were offered before the Lord; the people were blessed in the name of the Lord of hosts; and bread and wine were distributed to the whole multitude of Israel. And so now, when the Lord's people are really gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus, and He, the Head of the body, is truly known in the midst, who is also the mercy-seat above, then, doubtless, there will be blessing and gladness. The sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving will ascend from worshiping hearts to the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, and the affections will go out after every member of the body of Christ. If the presence of the ever-living and ever-loving Savior be not thus known and enjoyed, let it not be surprising if deadness and carnality in some shape or other be painfully manifested. Individual occupation with our glorified Lord Jesus is the secret of collective gladness and comfort. When each heart is rejoicing in the Lord, we can then have fellowship one with another, worship the Father in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and delight in the thought that

yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry {Heb. 10:37}.

Thanks be unto God, who hath called us

unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:9).

Communion then is the Christian's watchword. Our blessed Lord would have us share with Himself

the words (John 17:8).

-- the divine communications -- which the Father gave Him. He gives us too His own peace; that calm, unperturbed state, which ever flowed from confidence in the Father's love, so that He would have us be without heart-trouble, or fear, during the whole time of His absence. He said,

Peace I leave with you, *my peace* I give unto you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).

He would have us also share His joy. He said,

These things I speak in the world, that they might have *my joy* fulfilled in themselves (John 17:13).

As to *love*, His desire is that we should know that the Father loves us as He has loved Him (John 17:23, 26). And, to crown the whole, He will share with us His *glory*.

The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them (John 17:22).

Oh to be kept in the constant enjoyment of this sweet communion!

Manna and the Old Corn

This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6:58).

And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year (Josh. 5:11, 12).

We are in a world that yields nothing for our *souls*, absolutely nothing; and all, who are taught of God, prove this. Surrounded as we are surely with abundant providential blessings, and many social and national mercies, yet as to our *souls* it is

a dry and thirsty land, where no water is {Psa. 63:1}.

Such it was to our Lord, and such it is to us. We have, however, *resources* in God. He is to us *the Fountain of living waters* in and through Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood, and in whom we are blessed in the heavenlies with all spiritual blessings. Our never-failing springs then are in Christ, who is our wine to cheer, our bread to stay, our living water to refresh, our sufficiency and strength; a free and exhaustless supply to faith, as He said,

If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink {John 7:37}.

Thus we walk by faith, not by sight; for though by grace we are brought into such nearness and acceptance in Christ, we are, however, set in constant and entire dependence on Him, whom having not seen we love. It is the sense of this that enables us to glory in the Lord. It has always been the lesson God would have His people learn; hence, if the psalmist exclaim,

All my springs are in thee (Psa. 87:7),

we find one apostle writing,

Our sufficiency is of God (2 Cor. 3:5),

while another says,

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17).

Again, if we take our place in company with Jesus, we hear Him instructing His cleansed ones to cling to Him in order to bear fruit;

for without Me,

said He,

ye can do nothing (John 15:3-5).

In this way, we can easily understand why the apostle characterized the servants of Christ as

having nothing, and yet possessing all things (2 Cor. 6:10).

In looking over the history of the children of Israel, we notice, not only that they were a redeemed people, and frequently reminded by the prophets that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt with a high hand, but that they were constantly to have the sense of it kept up by observing the passover. They kept the passover in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land of

Canaan. Again, it is plainly set forth, that wherever they might be, or in whatever circumstances, God made Himself known to them as taking the care of their sustinment, because He had redeemed them. He was their Sustainer as well as their Redeemer.

If they were under the safety of the sprinkled blood, He gave them to eat the flesh of the lamb roast with fire, especially the head, the legs, and purtenance. Not only does this read to us typically the comforting lesson, that we are safe for eternity in virtue of the precious blood of the Lamb of God, but also that during this night of watching, and time of need, He who died for us is our strength, and that we should have communion with Him as to His mind, His walk, and affections. Again, when redeemed out of Egypt, and brought through the Red Sea -- place of death and judgment -- on new ground, they soon found themselves in a barren wilderness, removed from all visible means of subsistence, and therefore entirely dependent upon God. But this gave occasion for Him who chose them, and redeemed them, to prove His power and goodness in caring for them. Day by day, according to His word, He sent manna down from heaven for their support. We read that

the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited: they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan (Ex. 16:35).

When, however, they set foot on the promised land flowing with milk and honey, (which sets forth our present position in Christ in heavenly places), they were still dependent on God, though, instead of manna, their food was

the old corn of the land.

We are told that

the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year (Josh. 5:11, 12).

While we may gather from these facts in their typical import, that every believer is set in the position of dependence on God, and that He is the Sustainer of our souls, yet it makes a vast difference, to our state of heart whether our habit is to think only of Christ as the *Lamb* who shed His blood for many, or as the *manna* -- the One who came down from heaven, or as *the old corn of the land* -- the One who ascended up to where He was before.

Those who are thinking only of Jesus as crucified, limiting their thoughts mostly to what He did upon the tree -- blessed and most precious as it is thus to remember Him -- may be often reminded of the manifestation of divine love, sins borne

and suffered for, and peace made, thus assuring them of safety, and of being objects of divine grace; but such do not know deliverance from the world or from themselves, nor what it is to stand in liberty and joy in the presence of God. No doubt all our blessings are founded on the work of the cross, but *Jesus is not there now*. There was no singing in Egypt.

There are some, however, whose apprehensions of divine grace, and of the work of Christ, are beyond this. They know that Jesus who was crucified is risen, and that they are associated with Him whom the world rejected, and whom God raised from among the dead; they know too that they have life in Him who is out of death, and has triumphed over death and Satan. Such souls apprehend that they are rescued from this present evil world, and not of it, though they find themselves in a wilderness of need and dissatisfaction, and that they are going on to their inheritance. But such mostly think of God's blessings coming down upon them in the wilderness, and, it may be, regard earthly prosperity as a mark of divine favor. They are dependent, like the Israelites, on periodical ministrations from heaven, and are satisfied to gather up now and then a little food. The one thought of a soul not delivered from the world -- still in Egypt -- is his safety from coming wrath. The one thought of a wilderness Christian is having God's blessing poured down upon him day by day; he looks for the manna. Both thoughts very important in their place; but in neither of these states of soul is the conscience at liberty, or the heart at rest. Sometimes singing, and at other times repining, wilderness Christians know that they have been sheltered by the blood of the Lamb, and brought out of Egypt with a high hand, through the sea of death and judgment, and they have seen all their fleshly enemies dead upon the seashore; but, with all, their thoughts are limited to God's blessing poured out upon them down here. Very blessed surely it is to realize God's delight in blessing us here; but to know what it is to have to do with the ever-living, ever-loving Son of God Himself, as in Him who is in the glory, is another thing.

Blessed as it is to contemplate the faithful care of God day by day in providing for His people in a barren desert, it is sweeter still to know that "the manna" set forth Jesus; for He said,

I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever. . . . This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6:51-58).

Blessed as it is to think of Jesus as the One who *came down*, and gave His flesh for the life of the world in such matchless grace, yet the difference is most striking, as to our apprehension and enjoyment, whether we only think of Him as He *was* down here, or as He *is* up there. What the believer wants now day by day is the sustaining power and blessing of having to do with a living Person up there -- the Man in the glory. And no doubt *the* great cause of weakness and failure in believers is *not* that they do not sometimes remember the work of the cross, or that they forget that Jesus came down from heaven; but because they do not draw from, lean on, and abide in a living, faithful Christ in the glory, in constant dependence, obedience, and confidence. We need His continual upholding

care and blessing. Apart from Him, we are helpless. We can most truly say --

"As weaker than a bruised reed,
I cannot do without Thee;
I want Thee here each hour of need,
Shall want Thee, too, in glory."

It is when the believer enters by faith upon the new-creation blessings God has given us in Christ in heavenly places -- the true Canaan -- that he knows Christ Himself there as his Soul-sustainer --

the old corn of the land {Josh. 5:11}.

The

Corn of wheat {John 12:24},

which fell into the ground and died, is alive again, and in the glory. He then finds that it is not merely the work of Christ on the cross for us, nor the blessing poured out upon us on our pilgrimage which should occupy us, important as they are, but a full Christ up there, a living Person in the glory, even Christ Himself, who finished the work, and through whom all our blessings have come. It is Jesus glorified who is

the old corn of the land,

to whom we are now to look as the commanding and absorbing Object of our hearts. It is not merely promises, nor even privileges, but liberty to approach God with boldness, because He is there in whom we are for ever blessed, whose blood ever speaks there for us. Oh the unspeakable blessedness of feeding on Christ as

the old corn of the land

-- on Him, who is our life, righteousness, peace, and hope, and yet the One in whom are all our present and eternal springs and resources. And surely He is enough to fill and satisfy our minds and hearts. Known thus as an Object, He eclipses every other. Beauty then is seen nowhere else. All here is death and corruption apart from that living, incorruptible One. By the word and Spirit, which testify of Him, exercising our souls, we grow in acquaintance with Him, rise superior to old associations, and find ourselves in the circle of such love and dignity, as makes everything here seem poor and dissatisfying. The heart thus taken up with Him loses its relish for passing and fading things, and finds Him a satisfying Object, as He said,

He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst {John 6:35}.

He is enough for us; for not only is He almighty, but His love is perfect, and He is

the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8}.

He is able to sympathize with us; for He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and His compassions fail not. He ever lives to intercede for us, and always appears for us before the face of God. He is ever active and faithful in managing all our affairs for us up there, as the other Comforter does everything for us, and in us, down here. Well then might an inspired apostle enjoin us to set our minds on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and remind us at the same time that we

are dead,
or, have died with Christ, and that
our life is hid with Christ in God {see Col. 3:3}.

We find that “the lamb” was *eaten*, the “manna” was *eaten*, the “old corn of the land” was *eaten*. What is the instruction to us in this? Is it not that as those were all types of Christ, that we should feed by faith upon Him? Not merely think of Him, read about Him, hear about Him, or speak of Him, but receive God’s revelation of Him into our hearts, for our sustainment and joy. They did not merely think of the flesh of the lamb, or look at it, or the manna, and the old corn, but they *ate* it -- they felt they needed it, they partook of it, and thus received strength for walk and service. And so now. We may read a chapter in the Bible, or hear an orthodox discourse, and yet it may be sadly true of us, as it has been said of others,

The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed
with faith in them that heard {Heb. 4:2}.

No doubt it is by the written word of God that we have any knowledge of Christ; and the Holy Ghost, the Glorifier and Testifier of Christ, is Here to guide us into all truth, and to take of the things of Christ and shew unto us. So that, by the Spirit, through the Scriptures, the deep and wondrous glories of the Person, work, relationships, offices, moral excellences, and fulness of Christ are brought to us, and our souls are strengthened by feeding on Him. It is the needful daily employ for every child of God. When Jesus said to Mary {rather, Martha},

One thing is needful {Luke 10:42},

it was the habit of sitting at His feet, and hearkening to His word to which He alluded. This was Mary’s source of spiritual power. It was the good part which she chose. She was enabled to go forth from such a place of blessing, and let love have its own ready outflow, in breaking the costly alabaster box of very precious ointment, and pouring it upon Him, who was the conscious spring of all her blessing. Had Martha learned the same lesson, what failure and distress she would have been spared!

Feeding on Christ then is communion. It is an unfeignedly dependent one having to do with Him, leaning upon Him, drawing from Him, as He is set forth in the Scriptures, and revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. When God’s own testimony of Him is thus received into our hearts by faith, He is the food and strength of our souls. The more we feed on Him, the more we desire Him. If we are going out after the gratification of fleshly desires, we shall lose our relish for the sincere milk of the word. Fleshly lusts war against the soul. Where personal intercourse and communion with Christ are not practiced, there must be weakness and failure, even in those who have spiritual life. It is, therefore, of all importance for us, who have no visible sustaining power; such as “the lamb,” “the manna,” or “the old corn,” that we hold tenaciously, that for spiritual health and activity our joy and strength are found wholly in personal occupation with Christ Himself. Dead, cold, formal exercises are short of this, and to be dreaded. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, and hearkening to His word, are as “needful” as ever; and this the most spiritual and advanced Christians know best, and practice most. May we be kept abiding in Him.

The children of Israel fed on “the lamb” during the night, on “the manna” in the wilderness early in the morning, but on “the old corn” of the land at every time of need; and these points read instructive lessons to us. The passover feast was the remembrance of the lamb slain, by whose blood they had obtained safety. It was eaten

roast with fire {Ex. 12:8, 9},

which typically sets forth the suffering of death, which the Lamb of God endured for us.

In “the manna,” we have the One who came down from heaven

the bread of God {John 6:33},

the bread of life {John 6:35}.

He said,

The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for
the life of the world {John 6:51}.

The manna was a small thing to man’s eye, like hoar frost, and was to be

gathered {Ex. 16:14, 17}

before the sun rose, which would melt it; forcibly reminding us that the time for feeding on Christ is before the things of this old creation, however pure and necessary, have their effect upon us. The things of God should have their *first* claim on us. When Christ has the *first* place in our hearts, He will have every place. To begin the day in His strength is the secret of going through it well.

Blessed is the man whose *strength* is in thee {Psa. 84:5}.

It is a good thing to see the face of the Lord Jesus by faith before we see another face; we thus have power, from intercourse with Him, before we practically enter upon the day’s duties. What a precious secret of blessing this is! How different when we make the things of this life, however important, the first concern of the day, instead of Him, who said,

Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and His righteousness;
and all these things *shall be added* unto you {Matt. 6:33}.

The way the first part of the morning engages us, often tells the real state of our souls. If we are minding earthly things, they will assume increasing importance and gravity with us; but, if our minds are set on things above, the things of Christ, and His claims, will be the unerring standard of the value of everything. Feeding on Christ is a daily business, for

the inward man is renewed day by day {2 Cor. 4:16}.

The manna, too, was to be gathered fresh every morning; if it were kept, it would breed worms and stink. It is the habit of dependence and communion with the Lord, daily drawing directly from Himself, and not trying to live upon past experiences and gifts, however rich and abundant. Oh, the unspeakable blessedness of personally feeding on Him!

As we have noticed,

the old corn of the land

might be eaten at any time. It was unknown till they possessed the land. It was unlimited as to supply. It sets forth to us a full Christ, risen and ascended. We see Him in heavenly places --

the land. We enter the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, and know Him there, as

Head of the body, the church {Col. 1:18},

Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10},

the glorified Man, in whom

dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily {Col. 2:9}.

Thus knowing this blessed One in the glory, we have a full and never-failing supply of strength and blessing in Him, who is our righteousness and strength. We are accepted, blessed, complete, and seated in Him in heavenly places. We are therefore enjoined to abide *in* Him, to walk *in* Him, to be rooted and built up *in* Him. Wondrous place of blessing! Unspeakable privilege! Perfect acceptance, and nearness to God, in whom we have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places! May we go forward in the walk of faith as those who know that without Him we can do nothing, but as knowing also that we have strength for all things *in Him* that gives us power. (Phil. 4:13).

Another point to notice is, that if Christ risen and glorified be looked to as *the* source of all sustainment, we cannot forget He was the One who came down from heaven, and died for us on the cross. We shall know Him in the glory as the Lamb as it had been slain. Hence we find that they not only ate of the

old corn

when in the land the day after keeping

the passover (Josh. 5:11),

but that

the manna (Josh. 5:12)

ceased the day after they had eaten of the old corn. Here we see "the passover," "the manna," and "old corn" clustered together. We are told also that they did eat of

the old corn . . . unleavened cakes, and parched corn (Josh. 5:11);

the cakes and parched corn forcibly setting forth the sufferings of Him who has been bruised for our blessing, and has been cut off under the fire of divine judgment for us. (Josh. 5:10-12) Thus let it be carefully noted that if we are really occupied with Christ ascended into heaven, we shall never forget how He came there, and what He did for us upon the tree. The reverse, however, does not hold good; that is, souls may dwell frequently upon His sufferings and death upon the cross, and have little sense of personal intercourse with Him, and what He is for us and to us now on the throne. In fact some would teach us that the true place of a Christian is to be "always at the foot of the cross." Such know Christ as a Redeemer, but not as their ever living Sustainer; and this may account for much of the weakness among so many of God's children. Now while the death of Christ can never be forgotten, for it is the great manifestation of divine love, and all our present and eternal blessings are founded on it, still we know that He is not now on the cross, nor in the sepulcher, but at the right hand of the Majesty on high. We delight to remember Him. The passover was celebrated in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land, and we are to shew, or announce, His death till He come; and always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus. But, while we thus remember Him where *He*

was, we now see Him by faith where *He is*. Christ glorified is the Object of faith --

We see Jesus, who *was* made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9).

Having to do with Him there, we have power to walk as He also walked here.

We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

May we know day by day the precious reality of present sustainment and blessing, by feeding on Him who is now seated on the right hand of God, and who is soon coming to take us unto Himself!

Clean and Unclean

Ye shall be holy; for I am holy (Lev. 11:44).

I am holy is God's own declaration of Himself. When therefore He is pleased in addressing His people to connect with it,

Ye shall be holy,

it is clear that communion can only be maintained between the Father and His children on principles which are in accordance with His own mind. While communion therefore is the highest privilege that can be known on earth, yet it must be according to the holiness of Him who says,

Be ye holy; for I am holy {1 Pet. 1:16}.

May our souls be more sensible of the holiness of the fellowship which is of the Spirit!

In order to progress in the things of God, even when under the influence of divine truth, two things seem necessary; first, a moral condition of soul to be capable of reception; and secondly, an exercised state of mind. With the Corinthian believers, the former was so much wanting, that the apostle was unable to set before them the deep things of God. They were "carnal," and "babes," so that he could only feed them with milk, and not with meat. The Ephesian saints, however, were in a very different state, so that the apostle could happily set before them the eternal counsels, ways, and mysteries of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he was obliged to withhold from the Corinthians.

The epistle to the Hebrews furnishes us with an instance of the latter requirement. The apostle evidently desired to teach them many precious things about the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ, but they had been so unexercised by divine truth that they were *dull of hearing*. He said,

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:11-14).

It is clear therefore that exercise of mind by the truth of God is indispensable to our making spiritual progress, or to giving us competency to distinguish between good and evil. It can easily be seen how both these points bear on the line of truth now before us.

In pondering the solemn and yet precious subject of communion as set forth in Holy Scripture, we shall find that there are two branches which arrest us on the very threshold; first, the ways and walk which suit our Father in this holy occupation; and secondly, the way of restoration when communion has been broken. Scripture abounds with instruction on both these topics. As an example of the first we

may direct attention to the eleventh chapter of Leviticus.

It need scarcely be said that the various details of this chapter *literally* applied to the children of Israel. God having separated them as a people in the flesh unto Himself, them and their offspring, from every other nation on earth, redeemed them out of Egypt, and dwelt among them; He, with other manifestations of His care, prescribed what they should eat, and commanded that certain things should not be eaten, nor even touched, but had in abomination. No doubt as articles of food God selected the best for them. But the conclusion of the chapter points to deeper lines of instruction than are apparent in the beginning.

We do well to remember the teaching of the epistle to the Hebrews, that these ceremonials were of a carnal order, and only for the time, during the standing of the unrent veil. By the tabernacle service we are told that the Holy Ghost was thus signifying that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. We therefore read of both gifts and sacrifices, which could not make the worshiper perfect as pertaining to the conscience; also of meats and drinks, and divers washings and fleshly ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation, or of setting things right. With landmarks so clearly laid down, we can profitably ponder this and similar chapters, as the Holy Ghost may graciously guide and teach.

In these days, when men's minds are so active in raising questions about almost everything, not a few have said a great deal about what should be eaten, and what should not be eaten. But concerning this we have the clearest instruction in the New Testament. The Christian, on the one hand, is told that

every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (1 Tim. 4:4, 5).

On the other hand,

things strangled
and
blood {Acts 15:20}

are as much prohibited now as ever. Before the deluge God gave men

the herb of the field (Gen. 3:18)

for food; but after the deluge, and when the Lord smelled a sweet savor, or a savor of rest, in the clean beasts that had been sacrificed, and blessed Noah and his sons, He said,

Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is *the blood thereof*, shall ye not eat (Gen. 8:20 to 9:4).

Thus blood was prohibited by God in the days of Noah; and man, whether Jew or Gentile, infidel or Christian, has never from that time had liberty from God to eat blood. To believers in Christ who are brought into the liberty of children of God,

it has been written by the apostles:

It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, *and from blood*, and from *things strangled*, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well (Acts 15:28, 29).

From this Scripture it is clear, that, however literally this chapter in Leviticus called for an observance on the part of the children of Israel in daily food, to us it can have no such meaning; for the only prohibitions we have are “from things strangled,” and “from blood.”

That there are, however, deeply precious lessons now to be gathered by the spiritual from this chapter in Leviticus, and similar portions of the word, is obvious enough;

for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

And again,

All these things happened unto them for ensamples [types]: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (1 Cor. 10:11).

Moreover, inasmuch as Moses wrote of Christ, who is the great object of testimony in the ancient Scriptures, there must be found therein much instruction for us on the subject of communion; for in what could the Father have communion with us, unless it were concerning His beloved Son?

And do we not find precious traces of Jesus in this chapter in Leviticus? It surely is a divine treatise on “clean” as opposed to “unclean,” and is intended to teach God’s redeemed people lessons on holiness, and

to make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten, and the beast that may not be eaten (Lev. 11:47).

Can we ever think of clean as contrasted with unclean without being reminded of Him who was the holy, spotless Lamb of God?

We eat naturally to satisfy the cravings of appetite. By receiving and digesting food it becomes incorporated with our bodies, and forms a part of ourselves. We refuse certain things because of their uncleanness and unsuitability, and eat what we relish, and what we judge good for ourselves. Others do the same. When we eat of the same food with others, we have communion; we partake together of the same meat.

By eating then in a spiritual sense we understand communion. Our fellowship being with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, we are occupied with such things as suit this fellowship. The Father loveth the Son, and we love the Son. In Him the Father’s joy and rest unceasingly abide; in Him also we, in our measure, have joy and rest. What is “clean” therefore in Scripture, looking at it spiritually, must set forth Christ; and what is “unclean” must be unlike this perfect model, who knew no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

In this chapter we are led by the Spirit of God to learn lessons from the animal creation. We are first instructed by

what we find in beasts, then in fishes, then in birds, and, lastly, in creeping things. We know that when Jesus takes His rightful place as Son of man, and when creation, now groaning, is delivered from the bondage of corruption, things will be in a very different state from what they are now. Then it will be said of Him,

Thou madest Him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under His feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea (Psa. 8:6-8).

Then, too, the vision of the writer of the Revelation will be realized, concerning which he said:

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever (Rev. 5:13).

Blessed, however, as it is thus to contemplate the future deliverance of these creatures, it is good to be led by the Spirit of God to look at them now in their present groaning state, while Satan is the prince of this world, and to learn practical lessons of holiness as we become acquainted with God’s mind, and mark the difference between clean and unclean.

With regard to “beasts,” Moses is thus instructed to speak to the redeemed people among whom Jehovah dwelt:

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, These are the beasts which ye shall eat among all the beasts that are on the earth. Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is clovenfooted, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that shall ye eat. Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the coney, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the hare, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you. And the swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven-footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean unto you. Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch: they are unclean to you (Lev. 11:2-8).

They were thus directed to distinguish between clean and unclean, so as to feed on some and to refuse others, not even to touch them, but in the most decided way to hold that they are unclean.

The clean, as we have observed, shadow forth Christ. They were marked by two distinguishing features -- parting the hoof and chewing the cud. When an animal was found bearing *both* these characteristics it was clean, and might be eaten; but if only one of these qualities existed in the beast, no matter however prepossessing it might otherwise seem, it must be entirely rejected.

Of their flesh shall ye not eat, and their carcase shall ye not touch; they are unclean to you (Lev. 11:8).

The “divided hoof” is clearly suggestive of walk, and “chewing the cud” of meditation on the word of God. Both these were strikingly and perfectly set forth in Jesus the Son of God, whose fellowship with God knew not a moment’s

interruption until He was made sin and a sacrifice for us on the cross. We know that He *walked* not after the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. His delight was in the law of Jehovah, and in His law did He *meditate* day and night (Psa. 1:1, 2; Heb. 7:28). From these clean beasts then we are instructed not only to gather up spiritual food, but to go over it, portion by portion, in meditation, that it may be effectual for present comfort and strength in the walk. The importance of meditation on the Word can scarcely be over-estimated. It is more than reading, and one of the essentials of communion. By thus being occupied with the Scriptures, in dependence on the Holy Ghost and in faith, we receive God's thoughts into the mind and heart, and are thus guided and strengthened to walk for His glory. In all this Jesus was our perfect model. Meditating in the law of Jehovah day and night, He did always those things which pleased Him. Obedience was His constant employ. He said,

My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work {John 4:34}.

He was

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}.

These ways are clean and pure. Those who are born of God easily understand them. But there are unclean things to be rejected. There are spurious imitations of Christianity which the faithful are not to touch, not to be mixed up with the uncleanness of what is false, though it may to an unexercised soul seem to be genuine. The counterfeit in both the examples before us consists in separating what God has joined together -- receiving His word, and walking like Christ.

There are some who loudly cry up works. They contend for a righteous, conscientious walk. Their constant cry is, "Give and do." Practicing self-denial, and showing benevolence to our fellow-creatures, benefitting society, and improving the world, are the chief points they enforce. Philanthropy is their watchword. These are the Pharisees of modern times, and, like them, are hoping to have forgiveness of sins, if they need it, when they come to die. Though something like the clean animal in the one point of having a divided hoof, and leaving a certain track in the walk, yet they are as unclean as the swine, because they chew not the cud. The testimony of God as to man's utter ruin as a sinner, and of eternal redemption accomplished by Christ Jesus for all who believe in His name, as the foundation of all true Christianity, is ignored by them. Their principles are unclean, and those who are under their influence, whatever their apparent usefulness, are swine and not sheep:

The swine, though he divide the hoof, and be cloven-footed, yet he cheweth not the cud; he is unclean to you (Lev. 11:7).

There is another form of spurious Christianity equally unclean which also has many admirers. It cries up loudly the value of the Scriptures. Bible knowledge is inculcated. The precious volume is largely distributed. Christianity, as a system which is opposed to Judaism, Mohammedanism, and idolatry, is openly contended for. Bible-classes are formed; Biblical

literature is upheld as a necessary branch of education; but there is nothing vital for souls. The Word is not delighted in and received into the heart as giving eternal life now; and the certain knowledge of forgiveness of sins through faith in the Son of God is unknown. The consequence is, that with all this standing up for the Bible there is not the walk of faith, because there is not the life of faith upon the Son of God; though chewing the cud, there is not the divided hoof. Doctrines are merely held in the head without power on the heart and walk. This brings reproach on the truth, because it practically declares that a man can be a Christian and yet follow the pleasures of sin, as their attendance at theaters, concerts, the race-course, the hunting-field, the ball-room show, as well as the habit of spending their strength and time in the frivolous pastimes and idle amusements of modern society. Like

the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you (Lev. 11:4).

When the word of God in the love of it is received into the heart, the blood of Christ known as having purged the conscience, and the soul brought thus into the holy presence of God in perfect peace, we surely have no difficulty in concluding that henceforth we should live not to ourselves; but unto Him who died for us, and rose again (2 Cor. 5:15). May we love the word of God, esteem it better than thousands of gold and silver, and more than our necessary meat. May we so receive the Word from the mouth of God, that, like one of old, we may be able to say,

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart (Jer. 15:16).

Then it will search us; for it divides between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; then, in the sweet consciousness that we are children of God, we shall be constrained to receive the apostle Peter's injunction to walk

as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16).

As to fishes, there were two things which, when found together, marked that which was "clean" -- having fins, and also scales; all others were unclean.

These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination unto you: they shall be even an abomination unto you; ye shall not eat of their flesh, but ye shall have their carcasses in abomination. Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you (Lev. 11:9-12).

"Fins" show that the creature has power to go down, or rise high, or to swim against the stream; and the scales so completely enveloping them illustrate the covering or armor which the true servants of God have. We know how invulnerable Jesus was to every fiery dart of Satan. He could

truly say,

The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me {John 14:30}.

In the perfectness of faith, He who took upon Him the form of a servant, effectually resisted every temptation with,

It is written {Matt. 4:4, 7-10; Luke 4:4-8};

and every child of God, through grace, in Christ his righteousness has strength to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one, and to escape his wiles. Our strength being in Another, and not in ourselves, we are enjoined to

be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, and thus to

put on the whole armor of God {Eph. 6:10, 11}.

Being born of God, and also having the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, we are able to go against the tide of circumstances; to refuse the world's patronage and honors; to go down, if need be, to the place of self-abasement, or to rise higher and higher in the power of faith.

Nothing is commoner in Christendom than to find persons pleading circumstances, and other influences, in excuse for disobedience to the word of the Lord. What many really mean by the guidance of providence is often only the opening up of circumstances, irrespective of the mind of God. But the principle is "unclean." A dead fish is carried down the stream, and only turns according to the windings of the river. Not so the way of faith. It looks only to the Lord. It finds direction in His word. And though it be against the influence of dearest friends, and calls for the cutting off of a right hand, or the plucking out of a right eye, faith still goes forward; and though experiencing loss, and opposition of various kinds, follows the instructions of the word of God. Faith echoes the precious words of the Master, when in His unutterable agony,

Not as I will, but as Thou wilt {Matt. 26:39}.

A fish that has "no fins" finds its pleasure in burrowing in the mud, and its element in that which is unclean, being directed only by the current of circumstances; and a fish having "no scales," is, from its nakedness, exposed to every surrounding influence. Like many professors of Christianity, who not only find themselves at home in the world, its commerce, politics, pleasures, or religiousness, and make no stand for Christ's name and honor, nor rise up against the stream of scepticism, and infidelity, which threaten to carry everything before them. Alas! what must be the eternal doom of such professors, who, like one of old, betrayed the Lord with a kiss for a few pieces of silver! God be praised for opening our eyes to distinguish between clean and unclean; between what suits the holiness of God our Father, and what only accords with the unholy tastes of the fleshly mind!

There is a busy and persevering attempt in Christendom to hold the most profound truths of Scripture with a worldly walk and conversation. Such opposite elements, however, never can be reconciled. The Holy Spirit which indwells the child of God never can be otherwise than grieved at that which is contrary to divine truth; He cannot, therefore, comfort such, or give them the happiness of soul as if nothing were amiss, for He is holy. He gives us power by strengthening us with might in the

inner man to deny self, to resist the devil, and to refuse the fellowship of unbelievers; so that, like fish with "fins," if need be, we can go against the current of circumstances. He also takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, and so enables us to enter into the Father's love, and the present place and relationship He has given us in Christ, that, like fish with "scales," influences around produce little effect. Is it any wonder, then, that the testimony of the Scripture concerning fish which have

no fins nor scales {Lev. 11:12}

should be,

They shall be an abomination unto you; ye shall have their carcases in abomination. Whatsoever hath no fins nor scales in the waters, that shall be an abomination unto you (Lev. 11:11, 12)?

How plain and yet decided is the truth! How clear the instruction appears when we see its spiritual signification! What can be more opposed to God than the outward profession of the name of Christ, with the heart insubject to His will, and unattracted to Himself. In these lines of typical import, what a place the word of God has. It enjoins us to be taken up with Him who has left us an example that we should follow His steps; and to own the operations and teaching of the Holy Ghost, as the power of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. How these views we have had of clean and unclean beasts and fish seem to ask us, Does the word of Christ dwell in you richly? Do you meditate on it day and night? Are you, therefore, aiming to walk as He walked? Are you apprehending and enjoying your new creation in Christ? And are you conscious of a power (not your own) which enables you to go forward in obedience to the will of God, spite of all opposing circumstances? May we lay these things to heart, and hearken to what the Spirit saith!

Defilement From Contact

To make a difference between the unclean and the clean (Lev. 11:47).

It may be often observed in Scripture, that God directs us to the study of living creatures, in order that we may learn lessons suited to us as His children while on earth. In the chapter before us, the subject is the

difference between clean and unclean,

so that we may be instructed about the ways of faith and fellowship, to which, through grace; we have been called. In other parts of Scripture, the strength, the sagacity, or the forethought of several creatures, without reference to their being clean or unclean, are found also to minister instruction to us under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The Lord Himself is spoken of as a Lion --

the Lion of the tribe of Juda {Rev. 5:5}

-- because of His almighty power; for the

lion which is strongest among beasts, and turneth not away from any (Prov. 30:30).

He is also spoken of as a Lamb --

the Lamb of God {John 1:29, 36}

-- because of His gentleness, meekness, spotlessness, and fitness for sacrifice.

He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter (Isa. 53:7).

We are directed to the serpent as an example of wisdom, though in itself unclean and cursed above all cattle -- Be

wise as serpents (Matt. 10:16);

and to the dove for harmlessness -- be

harmless as doves (Matt. 10:16)

The conies are brought before us, to admonish us, when most conscious of our own feebleness, to place all our confidence, and find all our strength, in the Rock -- Christ Jesus.

The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks (Prov. 30:26).

From insignificant creatures like "the ants," we may learn to avail ourselves of opportunities for gathering means of blessing, notwithstanding our many infirmities --

The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their meat in the summer (Prov. 30:25).

To encourage us in the importance of Christian fellowship, and during the time too of our Lord's absence, when we have no *visible* head, we are enjoined to consider the locusts; for though they are individually small, yet, by combining their united energies, they accomplish wonderful and extensive results.

The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands (Prov. 30:27).

From the unclean spider we may also gather instruction. We are told,

The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in king's palaces (Prov. 30:28).

Unclean as we were as sinners of the Gentiles, yet having laid hold of eternal life in Christ, we shall be in the Father's house. Poor and insignificant as we are, yet a persevering diligence in God's ways, according to His truth and Spirit, will certainly lead to the honor that cometh from God only --

Them that honour Me, I will honour {1 Sam. 2:30};
and,

The soul of the diligent shall be made fat {Prov. 13:4}.

And further. In the wonderful work committed to the apostle Peter, of opening the door of faith to the Gentiles, we are told that he was divinely qualified for it by a vision of wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air. Up to that time he seems to have attached merely a literal interpretation to this eleventh chapter of Leviticus, and such like Scriptures; for when he saw the vision, and heard the voice,

Rise, Peter; kill and eat,
he replied,

Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean {Acts 10:13, 14}.

But now, under the direct teaching of God, he finds these beasts, and birds, and creeping things to be representative of men utterly unclean in themselves, but, through divine grace, capable of being cleansed by the precious blood of Jesus. So this great apostle, who had the keys (not of the Church, for it has no keys, but) of the kingdom, evidently understood the vision. Peter's own account is,

I was in the city of Joppa praying: and in a trance I saw a vision, A certain vessel descend, as it had been a great sheet, let down from heaven by four corners; and it came even to me: upon the which when I had fastened mine eyes, I considered, and saw four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And I heard a voice saying unto me, Arise, Peter; slay and eat. But I said, Not so, Lord for nothing common or unclean hath at any time entered into my mouth. But the voice answered me again from heaven, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. And this was done three times: and all were drawn up again into heaven (Acts 11:5-10).

We are further told, that

While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them (Acts 10:19, 20).

Nothing can be clearer than the spiritual instruction which God would have us gather from this deeply interesting chapter in Leviticus, and that these animals set forth the unclean workings of men in the flesh. But how blessed to know that though their uncleanness is unsuited to the presence of God, or the company of His people, yet that sinners of the Gentiles are not too unclean for the blood of Christ to cleanse and make fit for God's most holy presence.

In our meditations on the former part of this chapter, we have been seeking to derive profit from considering clean and unclean beasts, as well as from clean and unclean fishes. Fowls are next brought before us. Here, too, we have clean and unclean (cp. Deut. 14:11, 20, "Of all clean fowls ye may eat.") Again,

These may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth (Lev. 11:21).

The first point to notice in clean fowls is their power of rising above the earth. We know of our Lord, at a time when everything seemed to be against Him, that He rose above all earthly circumstances;

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight (Matt. 11:25, 26).

A clean fowl then leaps above the earth, is more or less heavenly in its flight. Secondly, clean fowls are harmless, and separate from that which is unclean; reminding us of Him who was

holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners {see Heb. 7:26}.

Thirdly, What can be more dependent on God? for they have neither storehouse nor barn. The unclean birds may turn again and again to the carcass as their store of food, not so the fowls that are clean. Fourthly, Many clean birds are joyful -- they sing and make melody; and so those who are born of God are enjoined to

rejoice in the Lord alway {Phil. 4:4};

and some know what it is even in circumstances of outward suffering, to

rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory {1 Pet. 1:8}.

Fifthly, They are exposed to many snares. With clean fowls, then, we are at home in gathering up precious lessons in the life and walk of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Especially we learn that believers are not of the world, for that which is of the world is not of the Father. If they have no power to leap upon the earth they are not clean. The apostle John says,

They are of the world

(their resources, their enjoyments, and their home):

therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us, Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (1 John 4:5, 6).

There must be then in those who are born of God something distinct from worldliness and earthly-mindedness, though it may be in some instances very limited in degree.

Yet these may ye eat of every flying creeping thing that goeth upon all four, which *have legs above their feet, to leap withal upon the earth*; even these of them ye may eat; the locust after his kind, and the bald locust after his kind, and the beetle after his kind, and the grasshopper after his kind. But all other flying creeping things, which have four feet, shall be an abomination unto you (Lev. 11:21-23).

Thus we see, speaking generally, that clean fowls are marked by being not of the world, but heavenly in their ways, and harmless; they may be surrounded by snares, yet are they dependent on God, and joyful creatures. Clean fowls then shadow forth the perfect One, who has left us an example that we should follow His steps, and who said of us,

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world (John 17:16)

But unclean fowls are very unlike Christ. They remarkably set forth the ways of the natural man. As the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, he must have something else on which to gratify his desires. They may be quiet occupations or noisy, moral or profane, nevertheless the quality is unclean, and is not of God; it is in some shape or other -- of the world, or of the flesh, or of Satan. The most refined natural man is

without God {Eph. 2:12},

and derives his pleasure from that which is unclean in His sight, however religious it may appear to men. The man who is not born anew can never rise above self. Philanthropy is self-gratification, and man is the object; Christianity is self-abnegation, and the glory of God is its object.

Unclean fowls were not to be eaten, not to be touched; even their carcasses could not be borne without uncleanness being contracted. We may, for the sake of brevity, group them into classes, though each creature has doubtless a separate line of instruction to us.

1. Some of these fowls feed upon carrion and other unclean things, and strikingly exemplify the *filthiness of the flesh* -- that which finds its pleasure in what is vile and corrupt. Hence, as Christians, we are enjoined to

cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God {2 Cor. 7:1}.

There are things not even to be once named among us,

as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks (Eph. 5:3, 4).

And again,

Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (Eph. 4:29).

The eagle, the vulture, and such like, belong to this class. Our Lord said,

Wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together {Matt. 24:28}.

It is a well-known fact that when an animal dies in the desert, the flight of these unclean birds towards the dead body for food takes place with incredible rapidity. They maintain themselves, and find their pleasure in feeding on that which is filthy and corrupt.

2. We are reminded of the *selfishness of man in the flesh* by many of those fowls, which are birds of prey. Their own existence is kept up through others being victimized. Man's motto is, "Mind yourself." His selfishness is the manifestation of the uncleanness of his nature. Jesus was not like this; for

He pleased not Himself {see Rom. 15:3}.

He went about doing good. His heart was set on blessing others. The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. Practical Christianity is holiness; it is walking as He walked. Hence the teaching of the Holy Ghost is,

Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:4, 5).

These birds of prey are selfish indeed. The hawk and such-like fowls pounce on small and defenseless creatures only to benefit themselves. The cuckoo drives another from the comfortable nest it has constructed, and appropriates it for its own use. Such creatures subsist on the helplessness and downfall of the weak. And how many a man makes a pedestal for himself by the ruin of others! How many fatherless and widows have been oppressed to enrich the coffers of the covetous! How few people now seem to rank covetousness with the grossest sins of immorality as Scripture does! May Jesus be our model, that blessed One who left us an example that we should follow His steps.

3. *The ungodliness and deceitfulness of the flesh* are specially brought out in the night birds. Eager to devour others, they quietly obtain the objects of their voracious appetite in the stillness of the night, when least suspected. The owls and other birds secrete themselves mostly during the day, and with singular powers of nocturnal vision, when their victims are unconscious of their danger, suddenly and almost noiselessly take them in their fatal gasp. What a striking illustration of practical ungodliness and deceit! Look also at the bat. It dreads the light. Large numbers of them are found in caverns and dark recesses in Palestine. It hides itself by day in filthy and desolate places, and in the twilight of morning and evening, with soft wings enabling it to fly without noise, swiftly and rapidly devours with its sharp teeth the many insects in its way. How unlike is all this to Jesus. How unsuited it is to His followers need not be detailed. Suffice it to say that our path is to be

followers [imitators] of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Eph. 5:1, 2).

And the grace of God teaches us thus to act;

for the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men; teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:11-14).

Such is practical Christianity -- the path divinely marked out for us. The unclean principles therefore which we have been contemplating are to be wholly shunned by God's dear children. Not only are we not to eat, but not even to touch their carcasses. Their carcass is to be loathsome to us; for we are to

have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret (Eph. 5:11, 12).

The unobserved and noiseless activities of the flesh are to be abhorred as much as those which are avowedly filthy and corrupt; the secret and refined ways of selfishness are to be held in abomination as much as those which are open and profane. To the Christian, Christ is the perfect model; and walking according to His mind we shall be

blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life (Phil. 2:15, 16).

This necessarily entails a separate path; for we are the Lord's, and the unclean are not to be touched. In this way we shall find special blessing:

Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and *touch not the unclean thing*; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters; saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:17, 18).

Creeping things were also to be had in abomination.

Every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth shall be an abomination; it shall not be eaten. Whatsoever goeth upon the belly, and whatsoever goeth upon all four, or whatsoever hath more feet among all creeping things that creep upon the earth, them ye shall not eat; for they are an abomination. Ye shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creepeth, neither shall ye make yourselves unclean with them, that ye should be defiled thereby (Lev. 11:41-43).

Creeping things move quietly, steadily, and with apparent humility; but they for the most part burrow in the earth, and know nothing higher. Jude traces the origin of the apostasy to certain men having *crept in unawares*. Through the unwatchfulness of the saints they quietly and steadily pursued their purpose, and found an entrance into the assembly of God's people. Jude says,

There are certain men *crept in unawares*, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ (Jude 4).

The apostle Paul also speaks of others who *creep into houses* and attract to themselves weak and silly women. He describes them as men who

resist the truth: men of corrupt minds.

After enlarging on the ecclesiastical evil of the last days, and giving this solemn sentence,

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, he adds,

For of this sort are they which *creep into houses* (noiselessly and yet perseveringly),

and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:5-8).

What a solemn but striking picture is this of what is actually going on in Christendom at this moment! How truly the spiritual import of

creeping things

was held in abomination by the apostles! Nothing can more clearly convey to us the need of entire separation from all such things, and not looking favorably upon them under any circumstances. If any plead that there is no harm in touching a creeping thing when dead, or if any solicit us to touch it because it has no power, we are told that it is still defiling.

Whosoever doth touch them, when they be dead, shall be unclean until the even. And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean (Lev. 11:31, 32).

An earthen vessel so touched must be broken, and whatsoever it contained be unclean. A fountain or pit with plenty of water, however, is clean. If the water here typify the Holy Ghost, it cannot be defiled. These, and other points of difference between clean and unclean, shew how exercised we should be before the Lord as to the things with which we are having fellowship. There are many who would refuse to *eat*, but do not hesitate to *touch*; many who reject certain doctrines and principles for themselves, yet associate harmoniously with those who hold them. Again, there are some who declare of certain principles and doctrines that they are unclean in themselves, but that they have become obsolete, and have practically died out; so that you need not hesitate now to touch the carcase of them. We need to be watchful, and continually before the Lord, lest we *touch* that which is unclean, and defile ourselves with any manner of creeping thing which creepeth upon the earth. We are told also, both as regards unsound doctrine and evil practice, that it spreads, and that a little is enough to set evil going. As a redeemed people, the habitation of God, and dear children of God, He says to us,

Be ye holy; for I am holy {1 Pet. 1:16}.

It is well to observe, before leaving this chapter, the remedy God graciously provided for such as made themselves unclean by touching the carcasses of unclean things. On several occasions we are told he

shall wash his clothes, and shall be unclean until the even {Lev. 11:25, 28}.

In every instance the instruction is to

wash his clothes.

This to us is figurative of bringing our near surroundings under the cleansing action of the word of God. In it there is both the acknowledgment of defilement, and the removal of it according to God's mind. Even if a clean beast, which they might eat, died, the person who touched its carcase would be unclean till even; and he that

eateth of the carcase {Lev. 11:40},

or

beareth the carcase {Lev. 11:28}

of it, shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even. So we see that that which at one time was clean to us, and with which the Spirit of God would lead us into happy fellowship, might afterward become so manifestly corrupt and unclean as to call for our withdrawal, and forbid us even to touch. There is another case in the seventeenth chapter of a somewhat different character, which may well be alluded to here:

Every soul which eateth that which *dieth of itself*, or that which was *torn with beasts*, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger, he shall both wash his clothes, and *bathe himself in water*, and be unclean until the even; then shall he be clean. But if he wash them not, nor bathe his flesh; then he shall bear his iniquity (Lev. 17:15, 16).

Here the defilement is of a more serious character, so that the person needs to be washed with water as well as his clothes, in order to be clean: if he neglected these requirements, he would come under judgment. All these instances shew the need of our having much to do with the word of God, not only to give us intelligence as to His mind, but to exercise our consciences as to our own state and surroundings, as well as to help us in self-judgment, remove defilement, restore our souls, and to enlarge our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. When the question is proposed in Scripture,

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?

The answer is,

By taking heed thereto according to thy word (Psa. 119:9).

How helpless and dependent the child of God is while passing through this evil world; yet, through abundant mercy, he can still say --

“When I am weak, then am I strong,
Grace is my shield, and Christ my song.”

Security, Communion, And Confidence

If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me (John 13:8).

It is a fact with which many are familiar, that the account of our Lord's washing His disciples' feet, and the four following chapters, are found in the gospel by John, and in no other portion of the Holy Scriptures. The time was exceedingly and peculiarly solemn. The blessed Lord had ere this openly taken His farewell of Jewish things. The beautiful temple was soon to be a heap of ruins -- not one stone left upon another; and a new order of things of a spiritual and heavenly character was to be brought in. Hence the washing of the disciples' feet, the disclosure to His own of the Father's house, the promise of the descent and abiding of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, and His marvelous operations, as also the blessed hope of our Lord's coming to receive us unto Himself, now have their place. It can easily be perceived how fundamentally important such instruction is to us, and how entirely foreign to Jewish ideas. We do *not* find here the declaration of the mystery of the Church, the body of Christ, because, according to the counsels of God, it was reserved for a subsequent revelation; yet these chapters clearly announce lines of deeply precious instruction suitable to us during the whole period of our Lord's rejection, until He come again.

These chapters, therefore, contain lessons of richest worth, which could not have been brought out while the Lord was presenting Himself as the Messiah to the nation of Israel; but, having been rejected, He could only leave them in desolation, darkness, and unbelief, until they shall say,

Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord
(Matt. 23:38, 39).

The time, therefore, was now come for setting forth great and precious doctrines for us.

In the first twenty-five verses of this chapter, there are three points of instruction to which we would direct attention -- the believer's security, communion with the Lord, and confidence of faith. This is the order in which these subjects are here presented, and assuredly it is divine. For until the believer is established as to his everlasting *security* in Christ, how can he enjoy *communion* with the Lord? And if not walking with the Lord, can he expect to have confidence in the Lord when adversity comes?

I. As to the question of THE BELIEVER'S SECURITY, several remarkable points are clustered together in the beginning of the chapter. In the first verse we read,

Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end {John 13:1}.

Love, divine love, is certainly the *source* of all our blessings. Our everlasting *security*, therefore, flows from divine love. It is His love to us which is *first*; for

we love Him, because He *first* loved us (1 John 4:19).

It is His love, not ours, which is the spring --

Not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).

This love then has been manifested in all its fulness, perfectness, and suitability --

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9).

Most souls when anxious and awakened to a sense of their obligations to God as His creatures, think that all their blessings are based on their love to God. They therefore try, and try again, most sincerely, to love God; when, after a constant sense of failure and sin, they learn the precious truth that God's love in the gift of His Son is the *source* of peace and salvation, and not their love to God. They say, "I am trying to love God," but until they know how marvelously God's love has come out to us, while we were yet sinners, they never get peace. All believers in the Lord Jesus, therefore, can say,

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us
{1 John 4:16}.

This love, too, is unchanging, for

whom He loved when He was in the world He loved them unto the end {see John 13:1};

that is, He loved them through all their failings, mistakes, and ignorance.

"His love's unchangeably the same,
And as enduring as His name."

It is divine love, the love of God to us in Christ in all its fulness, perfectness, and unchangeableness, which is then the *spring* of our eternal salvation, and therefore imparts to us the first sense of our everlasting security. And let us ever remember that it is not God's providential kindness to us in our circumstances, gracious as He may be in these things; but it is His love to us in the gift of His only-begotten Son, that tells us of His infinite grace.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

There can, therefore, be no peace, no sense of security, where the spring of our eternal blessings is not known as flowing to us in the gift of Christ; and until that is the case, souls, if truly awakened and earnest, will be looking to their own love to God, their feelings, their doings, the performance, of their promised resolutions, and the like, which Only increase their misery, and can never impart rest and peace. Happy those who so perceive the love of God in the Person and work of Christ, and its suitability to us, as to enable them to realise in their own souls the preciousness of the truth,

Perfect love casteth out fear {1 John 4:18}!

Then we have brought before us that which sets forth *the death of Christ* -- the supper (John 13:2); for nothing less than the death and blood-shedding of the Son of God could meet our need, or satisfy the claims of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. Nothing less than the unsparing condemnation of our sins could satisfy divine *justice*, and nothing less than our having everlasting life and salvation could satisfy divine *love*. The death of Christ, then, was absolutely necessary, and is the alone *ground* of peace and everlasting security.

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth alone; but *if it die*, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).

Precious love, that could thus manifest itself in cleansing and saving us, and bringing eternal glory to God! By the death of Christ, the question of our sins is for ever settled, according to the strictest claims of justice and truth, as well as love. We are told that He

bare our sins in His own body on the tree {1 Pet. 2:24},

that He

suffered for sins {1 Pet. 3:18},

died for our sins {1 Cor. 15:3},

shed His blood

for many for the remission of sins {Matt. 26:28};

that

He was wounded for our transgressions, . . . bruised for our iniquities, . . . and with His stripes we are healed {Isa. 53:5}.

We have thus in the death of Christ an immoveable ground of peace, and that which purges the conscience, because of remission of sins, on the ground of sins having been judged by God unsparingly in the Person of His beloved Son, who was

made sin {2 Cor. 5:21, see New Trans., JND}

and

made a curse {Gal. 3:13}

for us on the tree. If the *love* of God is the source of all our blessings, the *death* of Christ is the foundation of our everlasting peace and security; for

other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 3:11}.

Here we see the demands of *holiness* vindicated, the claims of *righteousness* met, *justice* satisfied, *love* manifested, *sins* judged, the *sinner* that believes saved, and *God* glorified. God, who condemned sin, now justifies the sinner on the principle of faith.

Jesus knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father {see John 13:1},

and the Supper, tell us of His death. It is the death of Christ, then, that has justly answered for us every charge of sin, and which sets our conscience at rest before God; for if the question be asked, Who is he that condemneth? The answer is, It is Christ that died, and it is God which justifieth. Thus we sing --

"The Lord of life in death hath lain,
To clear me from all charge of sin,
And, Lord, from guilt of crimson stain,
Thy precious blood hath *made me clean*."

But more than this. The Lord was in spirit at this moment on the other side of death. The language is very remarkable --

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God {John 13:3}.

Here we have the Lord presented to us in spirit on resurrection and ascension ground,

knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands.

We needed a Savior who could bring us to God -- bring many sons to glory; a Savior, therefore, who should not only save us from our sins, but be the Conqueror of Satan, and rise victoriously over death and the grave. This Christ did when He rose from among the dead; for, through death, He annulled him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and thus set free those who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. In the resurrection of Christ, we see not only God's testimony to the finished work of Jesus on the cross, but we also see Satan, who had the power of death, completely triumphed over, and a new and living way made for us into the presence of God. And further, He being now in the place of power at the right hand of God, we have life, righteousness, and acceptance in Him. Thus, if a doubt arises as to our having eternal life, it is met by the Scripture that

God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is *in His Son* {1 John 5:11}.

If it be a question of righteousness, we are told, God hath made Christ to be unto us

righteousness {1 Cor. 1:30}.

If an enquiry is raised as to our acceptance, we are told that we are

accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6};

that is, before God in all the acceptability of Christ Himself. If nearness to God be considered, we are thus as near to God as Christ is; and this always, for

in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ {Eph. 2:13}.

Thus believers, who were dead in sins, have been made alive, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, in whom the Father hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings. So that not a question remains unanswered as to our everlasting security and blessing.

In the death of the Lord Jesus, our sins have been judged, and thus purged; by the resurrection of Christ, Satan, death, and the grave have been triumphed over; and in Christ ascended we have eternal life, righteousness, acceptance, nearness to God, and all spiritual blessings; and His almighty power and perfect changeless love being to usward, we are kept for the inheritance in glory, and the inheritance is reserved for us. It need scarcely be added that the Holy Ghost is given to make all this known unto us, and to unite us to Christ. Thus, not a fear nor a doubt can possess a soul that is

stayed on the accomplished work of Christ, and God's testimony concerning it; and in this way we realize the truth of that Scripture,

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee {Isa. 26:3}.

How wondrous are the depths and heights of divine grace! Well might the apostle call it a

great salvation {Heb. 2:3}.

are those, who so grasp God's own declaration as to what has been accomplished for us by the death, and in the resurrection and ascension of Christ, as to

rejoice in the Lord always {Phil. 4:4}.

Do we know, beloved fellow-believers, what it is thus to rest and triumph, as accepted and blessed in Christ Jesus in heavenly places?

2. The precious instruction of *communion with the Lord* comes out immediately after the remarkable words already quoted --

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God {John 13:3};

which shew that He was in spirit on the other side of death when He addressed Himself to the mystic service of washing His disciples' feet. We expect therefore to gather instruction from it, as setting forth one of the glorious offices in which He is now actively engaged on our behalf while in the glory. That there is more in this gracious ministry than the mere act of lowliness -- marvelous as it was in this respect -- is perfectly clear; for Jesus said to Peter,

What I do *thou knowest not now*, but thou shalt know hereafter {John 13:7};

which remark would have been unnecessary if the act was only intended to set forth the Lord's deep humility. But the Holy Ghost having come down, since this scene was enacted, to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, this and many other of His gracious words and ways are now made known to us.

It is well to notice that the Lord is alone engaged in this service. No one is allowed to help in it, as on some other occasions; nor was it needed.

He took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded {John 13:4, 5}.

Now, What does this mean? Peter's ignorance and rash expressions are overruled to bring to us the Lord's own thoughts of this service. When Peter hastily exclaimed,

Thou shalt never wash my feet,

it elicited from the Lord how indispensable this service was for communion, or having part with Him.

If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me {John 13:8}.

And when Peter again, with equal rashness and ignorance, said,

Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head

{John 13:9},

it became the occasion for the blessed Lord to give a fuller elucidation of this service by saying,

He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit {John 13:10};

by which we understand that he who has been in a bath, washed all over, only needs afterward to have his feet washed, so as to cleanse away the defilement his feet had gathered up in walking in a defiled and defiling place. He had been washed once, and was thus

clean every whit;

but now it is a question of removing the uncleanness which *the feet* had since contracted.

Peter's thoughts exactly meet many dear souls in the present day. They think, when conscious of having sinned since they believed in Christ and had peace with God, that they must come to the Savior as sinners, as they did at first, and be again washed in His blood. But when a believer sins, it becomes a question between him and the Lord not of salvation, but of communion. Saved people, servants having part with their Master, is what we have here. Let us not fail to notice that the necessity for this service is that we, who are servants of the Lord, may have communion with our loving Master -- have *part* with Him.

If I, your *Lord and Master*, have washed your feet {John 13:14}.

Having part with Him is surely not *salvation*, but *communion*.

A child of God hates sin, and desires, in obedience to the Lord's word, *not* to sin; yet through failure he does sin. This not only makes him sad, but communion with the Lord is interrupted. Of this he is sorrowfully conscious, and longs to have part again with his blessed Master. This bows him in self-judgment and confession, and earnest desire for restoration to happy communion. The question is, Does he want to be washed again in the blood? or, as some put it, Does he need a fresh application of the blood? We reply, Certainly not. Where does Scripture speak of a fresh application of the blood? It is not washing with blood here, but with water. The truth is, that every believer is by the one offering of Christ perfected for ever; he is a child of God, and is always before God, as we have seen, in all the nearness and acceptance of Christ Himself. But by the cleansing with water we understand the application of the word, as Scripture says,

The washing of water by the word {Eph. 5:26}.

The priests of the nation of Israel, after having been at the *altar of burnt-offering*, had to wash their hands and feet with water at the *laver* when they went into the tabernacle of the congregation. So we, having been once washed from our sins in the blood, need afterward that the defilement contracted in our *walk* should be cleansed, and the heart comforted, as this blessed service of the washing of the feet with water and wiping them with the towel seems to imply. This ministry of our Lord to us now by His Spirit, may be either directly from Himself, or through instrumentality; but in either case the word is so brought to bear upon our troubled souls as to restore us to communion with Himself. For our blessing we are assured

that,

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to *cleanse us from all unrighteousness* {1 John 1:9}.

How comforting, too, is that word,

If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged (1 Cor. 11:31).

To walk with the Lord, to have part with Him in His thoughts, affections, ways, and service, is surely a wondrous favour; and our carrying about with us an evil nature, which has been judged on the cross, need not hinder this. But if we give way to fleshly lusts, they war against the soul, grieve the Spirit, and we cannot enjoy part with Christ till we are restored. The priests of old had to wash both their hands and feet. We have not to handle sacrifices, &c., like Aaron and his sons, but have to walk for the glory of God. Hence we need only to have our feet washed. This feet-washing is surely a most gracious provision for us during this present time; and does it not sweetly assure us of our Lord's warm desire that we should be keeping company with Him? And is not this desire of the Lord further brought out by the expression that we should carry out this same restoring ministry to others?

If I then, your Lord and Master have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them (John 13:14-17).

So that as He by the action of the word seeks to relieve and restore His failing and distressed servants, so should we in meekness seek to minister to our fellow-servants the word of God, with the hope of thus restoring and comforting them. Happy indeed are those who thus walk in the Master's steps!

3. CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD flows out of communion. Those who have trusted Him most, and walked with Him most, know Him best; and those who are so practically near Him, and taken up with His word, as to drink in His thoughts, observe His ways, and enter into the secrets of His heart, are able to confide in Him in the time of adversity. Blessed are those who "hearken" to Him; for such shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

The sudden and unexpected announcement of the Lord,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me (John 13:21),

must have filled them with surprise and distress. It was a most solemn moment. With indescribable sadness

the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom He spake (John 13:22).

They seemed thunderstruck, and knew not what to do. Why did they not cry out to the Lord about it at once? There was one only who appeared to be up to the emergency. None but he could confide in the Lord about it, and at last Peter made a sign that he should ask who it should be of whom He spake; and the disciple who had been leaning on Jesus' breast unhesitatingly, in all the confidence of love,

saith unto Him, Lord, who is it? {John 13:25}.

Here we close these remarks, only suggesting whether we are not sweetly taught by this brief narrative that if we would be ready for an emergency, and have confidence in the Lord in times of adversity, we must be dwelling in the Lord's love, and walking and serving according to His own mind, having part with Him. We know who said,

Abide in me {John 15:4},

Learn of me {Matt. 11:29},

Follow me {John 12:26},

and

If any man serve me, him will my Father honour {John 12:26}.

May the Lord Himself so truly engage our hearts that --

"With His beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none may see."

The Father's Love

For the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God (John 16:27).

Our Lord Jesus Christ received these precious words from the Father, who commanded Him to speak them for our comfort (John 12:49). They sweetly assure us of the Father's love. We read of *God's love* --

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

We read also of *Christ's love* --

Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25);

and of the *Father's love*, which is exercised toward those who, through grace, have been brought into relationship with Himself --

the Father Himself loveth *you* {John 16:27}.

The Father's love has *wrought for us* in accomplishing redemption through the death of His Son, and in Him risen and ascended, according to His eternal purpose; thus giving us life in Christ, and bringing us into the relationship of children, as well as uniting us to Christ by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

The Father's love has *wrought in us* in revealing His Son unto us. When our Lord said to Peter,

Whom say ye that I am?

and he replied,

Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,

Jesus immediately said,

Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven (Matt. 16:15-17).

Thus we see that every one who has apprehended the person of the Christ, the Son of the living God {Matt. 16:16},

has only done so because of a distinct revelation of the Father to him. Without this, whatever else we may have known, we should have been in darkness as to the person of the Son; concerning whom it is said,

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life (1 John 5:12).

To apprehend the person of the Son of God is entirely beyond the scope of the natural man. He may have heard of His name and of His works, he may be acquainted with the external circumstances of His death on Calvary, and of the fact of His resurrection, and yet not know Him. Though to the natural eye Jesus was like another man,

in the likeness of sinful flesh {Rom. 8:3},

yet Peter saw, by the revelation of the Father, that He was

the Christ, the Son of the living God.

The Father has also *wrought in us* in having drawn us to Christ as sinners to a Savior. It is only by the working of the Father's grace in our hearts that we have thus had to do with Him whom

the Father sent. Unless the Father had specially wrought in us in this way, it is certain we should never have found our true place, as hell-deserving ones, at the feet of a gracious Savior. It is well to have the sense of this fact constantly fresh in our souls; for Jesus said,

No man *can come to Me*, except the Father which hath sent Me draw Him (John 6:44);

and again,

No man *can come unto Me*, except it were given unto him of My Father (John 6:65).

Thus we see that the Father's love has accomplished redemption for us, brought us into nearness to Himself, called us into the relationship of children, given us the Spirit, revealed His Son to us, and drawn us to Him as our Savior. How sweet to think of the various yet distinct actions of the Father's love! Well might an inspired servant cry out,

Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us {1 John 3:1}!

How astonishing then is the fact that there are those on the earth who, though poor and feeble in their own eyes, sensible too of much failure, coldness, and forgetfulness of Him, are the constant objects of the Father's love; those on whom He ever looks with a Father's watchful eye, and ministers unto with Fatherly care. He is the perfect Father. He knows the state of heart, as well as the need, peculiarities, and circumstances of each child; and withholds or gives, sends adversity or prosperity, as is most for our real good. He disciplines and chastens for our profit, that we may be in subjection to Him, and be partakers of His holiness. It is well that we should receive all from Him, for all is dealt out in infinite wisdom by the hand of perfect love; for

"A father's heart can never cause
His child a needless tear."

He desires us to cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us, to make all our requests known unto Him by prayer and supplication; and in this our Lord encouraged us by saying,

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father, which is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him? (Matt. 7:11).

But one of the children of God may inquire, "How much does the Father love me?" We are told that the Father loves us as He has loved Jesus (John 17:23). Our blessed Lord said to His disciples,

As the Father hath loved Me, *so* have I loved you {John 15:9}.

His love to us then is the same as the Father's love to Him; and elsewhere we find He prayed that by-and-by the world may know that the Father loves us as He has loved Him. Thus we find that the infinite, eternal, unchanging love of the Father to

the Son is the measure of His love to us His children. This, too, will be manifested ere long in answer to His prayer,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word . . . and the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that *Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me* (John 17:20-23).

In perfect keeping with the activity of this infinite, eternal, unchanging love, the Father hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Thus we are always before His eye in all the nearness, acceptance, righteousness, and life of Christ, and blessed in Him with all spiritual blessings; and all this, and more, to be known *now* for our present enjoyment, and power for service and conflict. What a precious assurance for our poor hearts are these few words of our adorable Lord,

The Father Himself loveth you {John 16:27}.

It is, indeed, a great secret for our souls when such words are received in faith, and we grasp them as infallible and settled for ever. We shall then be able to say in the hour of deepest sorrow and affliction --

“Although my cup seems filled with gall,
There’s something secret sweetens all.”

But why do we not enjoy the Father’s love more than we do? Because the Holy Spirit, which is given unto us, by whom the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, is grieved. When we walk obediently we abide in His love, and enjoy the presence of the Father and the Son. To be loved by the Father is a precious fact for every child of God; but to enjoy the Father’s love and presence is the privilege of those only who are walking obediently to His will. Jesus said,

If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him (John 14:23).

Let no believer imagine then that he will have the comfort of the Father’s love, if he is not walking in the truth according to the Father’s will. In the path of disobedience the Holy Spirit dwelling in us is grieved, and we are not in the place where the Father’s presence can be known. Our blessed Lord said to His own loved ones for their encouragement,

I have kept My Father’s commandments, and abide in His love (John 15:10).

We are told here who are the objects of the Father’s love. They are those who have loved Jesus, and have believed that He came out from God. Not those who say this and that, but those who have the two grand cardinal points of vital Christianity -- faith and love. They always go together when there is a divinely-wrought work in the soul, for *faith* worketh by *love*. Every true believer loves. He loves the Lord Jesus, and all that are His. He loves the brethren, the truth, the service of the Lord, and all that is in association with Him. The believer loves, and he who loves, believes. Without this love, whatever else he may boast of, he is

as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal {1 Cor. 13:1}.

Love is a vitally important point; for

if any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha (1 Cor. 16:22).

We love, because we believe the love of God to us.

We love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

We most certainly believe that Jesus came out from God; we have no doubt of it. We grasp the divine love that gave Him, and we cannot but love Jesus. We believe and love. Oh, the preciousness of the Savior’s words,

The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God {John 16:27}.

The more we ponder this precious subject, the more our hearts become melted, and our ways molded, according to this elevated and eternal relationship. To be

children of God {Gal. 3:26}

now, while in mortal bodies, and in a world where sin reigns unto death, is indeed a glorious fact; and, because we are sons, to have the Holy Spirit sent into our hearts, crying, Abba Father, is love so rich, so free, and so abundant, as never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive. And yet, how true it is. Our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Wondrous grace! All

to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6}.

While looking then to our glorified Lord, we can say --

“Yea, in the fulness of His grace,
God put me in the children’s place,
Where I may gaze upon His face,
O Lamb of God, in Thee!

“Not half His love can I express;
Yet, Lord, with joy my lips confess
This blessed portion I possess,
O Lamb of God, in Thee!

“And when I in Thy likeness shine,
The glory and the praise be Thine,
That everlasting joy is mine,
O Lamb of God, in Thee!”

The Ashes of the Red Heifer

It is a purification for sin (Num. 19:9).

In our previous meditations, we have been endeavoring to learn from Scripture the ground on which our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, has been established; we have also looked at Lev. 11 as a sample of what Scripture types teach, as to what must be chosen and loved, and what must be refused and abhorred, in order to maintain the life and walk which

the communion of the Holy Ghost {2 Cor. 13:14} enjoins.

As a matter of fact, however, the child of God has often painfully to acknowledge, that he does not practically maintain this communion. He has to deplore contracting defilement, if not to judge himself every now and then for positive disobedience. Thus communion is interrupted; for, though the Father loves us, He cannot walk with His children on any principle of uncleanness. Nor does the child of God desire it, for he hates sin wherever he finds it. It is then good to know that for defilement, however contracted, God has graciously made provision. In the New Testament we are told that,

If any man
(i.e. any child of God)

sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous {1 John 2:1};

and the Lord Jesus is also blessedly set before us as the Washer of His servants' feet, to cleanse away the defilement they may have contracted. In the Old Testament great principles of truth of a similar character are brought out; not only in the discipline of Jehovah's servants on account of failure, and for their restoration, but also details are given of the deep and varied exercises of soul, which the elect remnant of Jews will pass through, before they are turned away from their transgressions, thoroughly restored, and brought by divine grace into their promised liberty and blessing. Moreover, in early days, directions were largely given for detecting and removing uncleanness and defilement, whether it be through touching a dead bone, or by a man dying in a tent; or even if it be leprosy itself, either in the individual, his garment, or the house of any of those who belonged to the camp of Israel, where Jehovah was dwelling.

We now turn to Num. 19, because the ordinance of the red heifer shows not only that the allowance of defilement was strictly forbidden, but also that the gracious way of restoration, when defilement had been contracted, was according to the holiness of God. The subject is of all-importance; not that it treats of restoration from flagrant transgressions, for it does not; but because it shows how small a matter is enough to check and hinder communion, and this sometimes from circumstances over which we have had no control, as a man dying in a tent defiling all that were in it; and yet we find, in

every instance, the exact way of restoration graciously provided. It reads lessons specially to us, who are travelling on to our rest through a region of sin and death; for it treats of uncleanness, and the purification of those, who, belonging to God, were in their wilderness journey. This is why, perhaps, we have the ordinance of the red heifer in Numbers, which records Israel's way through the wilderness, and not in the book of Leviticus, which treats of grace and holiness, specially in regard to approaching God.

The ordinance of the red heifer stands alone. While other sacrifices are often brought before us, this is recorded in no other part of Israel's history; nor is there any account of its being repeated. The ashes of the burnt heifer were, or should have been, preserved all along the journey; because all was intended to prefigure the sacrifice of Christ once offered, and never to be repeated. The efficacy of His sacrifice being everlasting, there was no need of repetition. It perfected for ever. Hence we read,

There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins {Heb. 10:26}.

The red heifer has the character of a sin-offering. The "ashes" stand prominently in the chapter. They were laid up without the camp in a clean place, and

kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin (Num. 19:9).

This was the purifying power God provided. There was no other way of being freed from such defilement, and restored to the camp, than by being sprinkled with the ashes of the heifer. Even *then* it was only a ceremonial cleansing, called in Scripture that which

sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh {Heb. 9:13};

but we have deeply solemn lessons to learn from its typical import. May we hearken to the voice of God with attentive and anointed ears!

The heifer provided for this sacrifice must be red -- a most rare and difficult thing to find in the world, among the thousands of cattle on its hills, one heifer answering completely to this description. It must also be without spot; neither should it be one with the least blemish, nor ever have been yoked with others as thus under the rule of man. All this was needful in order to be a fit type of Jesus the Son of God, who was emphatically

a Lamb without blemish and without spot {1 Pet. 1:19},
and always set apart for God. He

was holy, harmless, undefiled {see Heb. 7:26};
and, instead of being yoked for men's purposes, He was
separate from sinners {Heb. 7:26}.

The heifer having been found in all respects fit for the

sacrifice, it was then slain; thus shadowing forth Him who not only

offered Himself without spot to God {Heb. 9:14},

but who

died for our sins {1 Cor. 15:3},

suffered for sins the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God {1 Pet. 3:18}.

The precious death of Jesus the Son of God was thus solemnly set forth, who

was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities {see Isa. 53:5}.

May we always think of it with adoring and worshipping hearts!

The sacrifice having been killed, one of the priests (not Aaron, the high priest, but Eleazer, his son) took the blood, and sprinkled it

before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times {Num. 19:4},

which is the place of communion; for the subject here is not justification, but communion. It was sprinkled seven times, not round about the altar, but *before the tabernacle*, to represent where we meet God, and to show the ground of communion perfectly established. The rest of the blood, and every part of the heifer, including her skin and her dung -- the whole sacrifice -- was burnt. In the midst of the burning of the heifer, the priest cast in scarlet, cedar wood, and hyssop, because they set forth the royalty, incorruptibility, and lowliness of Jesus, and the whole was consumed under the fire, which represented divine judgment. The burning continued till all was reduced to ashes.

The ashes were gathered up by a clean man, and laid up without the camp in a clean place, to be kept for a purification for sin; for the ashes were mixed with running water (Num. 19:9).

They shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it, &c. (Num. 19:17, 18).

Observe, all was done without the camp, the killing of the heifer, the burning of the heifer, the laying-up of the ashes, and the sprinkling of the unclean; for here it was that the defiled were: they were apart from the sanctuary of God; they were outside the camp, because of their uncleanness.

The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and *whosoever is defiled by the dead*: both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, IN THE MIDST WHEREOF I DWELL (Num. 5:1-3).

It is important also to notice that all who were employed in the work of removing the defilement from others contracted uncleanness themselves. And do we ever deal with evil, or seek to set others right who have gone wrong, without ourselves contracting defilement? It is very serious, and yet most instructive.

As to this, we learn in this chapter:

1. That the priest who sprinkled the blood, and cast the things into the burning of the heifer, was unclean until the even, and had to wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water before he could come into the camp (Num. 19:7).
2. The man who had burnt the heifer had to wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and was unclean until the even (Num. 19:8).
3. The clean man who gathered up the ashes had also to wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even (Num. 19:10).
4. The clean person who sprinkled the water of separation upon the unclean had also to wash his clothes; and he that touched the water of separation was unclean until even (Num. 19:21).

Surely nothing could more strikingly bring before us the solemnity of having to do with evil in others, and the need of those who are occupied in setting others right being themselves spiritual, and given to watchfulness and self-judgment; and being also in the spirit of meekness and fear, lest they themselves become defiled. Seeing, then, how difficult it is to have to do with uncleanness in anyone without becoming defiled ourselves, we do well to take heed to the apostolic injunction on this subject:

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

How forcibly this ordinance of the red heifer reminds us that God would have the people, among whom He was dwelling, to be in that state, and to manifest that conduct, which were suited to His own holy presence!

Nothing of death, no, not even the touch of a dead body {Num. 19:11},

or of

a bone of a man {Num. 19:16},

could suit

the sanctuary of Jehovah {see Num. 19:11};

for death in man witnessed of sin being connected with it --

By man came death {1 Cor. 15:21},

as well as sin, for death is the wages of sin. It could not possibly therefore be a light thing for any of those among whom Jehovah was dwelling to touch a dead body. We therefore read:

He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days (Num. 19:11).

We saw in Lev. 11, that for touching the carcase of an unclean beast the man was only unclean till even, but here for touching the dead body of a man he was unclean seven days. The reason of the difference is obvious; for *man* is connected with sin as well as death. For his purification God graciously provided the water of separation, of which the defiled man should avail himself; and that not only because of his personal uncleanness

excluding him from the camp, but because, by his having thus contracted uncleanness, he

defileth the tabernacle of the Lord {Num. 19:13}.

Refusing to purify himself was a most serious delinquency.

Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of Jehovah; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him (Num. 19:13).

Again it is said,

The man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of Jehovah: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean (Num. 19:20).

What a serious thing to be “cut off” by God!

Nothing can exceed the clear and decisive instruction of these verses; and nothing could more forcibly convey to us the need of practical holiness in order to walk with God, or show the impossibility of our continuing in the enjoyment of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, while careless and not self-judged. We are not our own. We are the children of God, and He is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. Sin is no trifle. Not only would He require us to

have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness {Eph. 5:11},

but not even to touch the unclean thing; so that while we

cleave to that which is good,

it equally becomes us to

abhor that which is evil {Rom. 12:9}.

And when sensible of interrupted communion, we should at once give ourselves to self-examination, self-judgment, and the confession of our sins, in order not only to have the assurance from His own word of forgiveness, but the consciousness of being thoroughly cleansed. To us, we know, all comes through the advocacy of Jesus Christ the righteous, and upon propitiation made, and is brought home to us by the action of the Holy Ghost applying the word to wash away the defilement.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Thus we are clean, and restored to this wondrous privilege of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

But this action of restoration does not give us the idea of either a slight or a rapid process. We know that sometimes a considerable period of time is involved, before those who have been conscious of uncleanness are fully restored. It is a point in this ordinance not to be overlooked. As we have seen, the man was unclean “seven days,” during which the process of restoration was to be going on. Seven, in typical language, means that which is complete; from which we learn that a period, perfectly adequate, must pass, for certain experiences

to be known, before he could be fully restored. This, in our case, as to time, may be short or long. But the Israelite who had been defiled must realize as facts:

1. That he is unclean, and therefore outside the camp.
2. That by his uncleanness he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord.
3. That his heart bows under the sense of it, as one among whom God dwells.
4. That he has availed himself of the water of separation, and is cleansed. But more. We are told,

He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean (Num. 19:12).

Thus in the man’s restoration there are two stages:

1. Up to the third day he is conscious day and night of what it is to be defiled, to teach us that God would have us to be clearly and thoroughly conscious of the gravity of it; then on the third day he is sprinkled with the water of purification for sin.
2. From the third to the seventh day he is conscious of having been sprinkled, but not able to come into the camp in the full sense of cleansing. Then he is sprinkled again, washes his clothes, and himself, and after that at even he is clean.

And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even (Num. 19:19).

The ashes having had running or living, (not stagnant or impure,) water, put thereto in a vessel, shows us that the word testifying of Jesus who once suffered for our sins, and was made sin for us, when brought home to our souls by the power of the Holy Ghost, is the cleansing remedy for restoring us from defilement to communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. It is not, as many have wrongly supposed, a fresh application of the blood of Christ, because by that one offering we have been perfected for ever; but it is the word, which testifies of Jesus in His finished work of redemption, applied with cleansing power to our consciences by the Holy Ghost. How often have we found that, after confession of our sins, and the belief, too, that He has been faithful and just to forgive, our souls have not been consciously and happily restored to communion; but when the word is brought to bear on our hearts and consciences by the Holy Ghost, giving us the sense of being really

cleansed from all unrighteousness {see 1 John 1:9},

then we realize that our communion is not only restored, but is often deeper and happier than before. We are restored, then, by the washing of water by the word.

The same principles apply as to other forms of defilement, whether of a personal or of a congregational character. Personally we may be defiled by contact with the smallest amount of uncleanness --

a bone of a man
as much as
a dead body {Num. 19:16},

because with God it is not merely a question of the amount of evil, but of any evil; and the path of the faithful is to depart from iniquity.

A grave
is also defiling, because it is connected with sin and death. A man

slain with a sword in the open fields {Num. 19:16},

being touched, also defiled. It may refer to our again turning to that which has been already judged and separated from. Observe, it is "one slain," reminding us of sin by man, and death by sin. But a man dying in a tent, and defiling all in the tent, and all that came into it, shows how congregationally a little leaven leavens the whole lump; and how God will have us, as His assembly, exercised about being clean congregationally as well as individually. All who were in the tent were then to take the place of humiliation, confession, and to be cleansed by the water of purification, before they could resume their place as connected with the sanctuary of the Lord. Things exposed, which ought to be covered, are also unclean, as an

open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it
(Num. 19:15).

This mode of defiling must not be overlooked.

How important then it is to see that sin is a most serious matter, and that communion can only be maintained on principles that are suitable to the Father and the Son; nor is it possible that the Holy Ghost could lead us to walk in any other path. No doubt it entails such watchfulness and constant dependence, that walking carelessly, not to say with levity, is altogether out of the question. The smallest contact with uncleanness is defiling, and walking for a moment after the flesh is damaging. An impure thought may interrupt communion; hence we are admonished to abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul; and to cast down imaginations [reasonings], and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. But how wonderfully has divine grace provided for us, in the advocacy of the Lord Jesus, the ministry of the indwelling Spirit, and the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever! What lessons of holiness and grace all have to learn in the school of God! Our souls are astonished at the infinite wisdom of God to us-ward, as well as His power and grace, as we grow in the knowledge of His truth! Dreadful as it is, and so wholly unbecoming those who are born of God to sin, that he says,

My children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not
{see 1 John 2:1};

yet, if we should sin, His gracious provision forbids our desponding, but encourages us to pour out our troubled hearts to Him in confession. Thus the Holy Ghost directs us to Him in the glory, the Washer of our feet; and while making us sensible of our uncleanness having interrupted communion, brings home with power the infinite virtue of what was done

for us on Calvary, as revealed in holy Scripture. Thus, as the defiled Israelites were sprinkled with

the ashes of an heifer {Heb. 9:13},

so the Holy Ghost brings to our hearts and consciences the eternal efficacy of the one offering of Christ; and as the one outside the camp defiled by the dead had also to bathe his flesh and wash his clothes, so we prove, to our soul's comfort, what it is to have ourselves, and our near surroundings, brought under the cleansing action of the word, and thus again to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

Leprosy: Outbreak of Sin

He is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be (Lev. 13:46).

The hindrances to communion which we have been gathering from Scripture thus far, have been defilements contracted from without, by the influence of unclean things, or dead things. We have gone over several varieties, but they have all been from what is *outside* us; for the cleansing of which, God graciously made provision according to the nature of the cases, and suited to His presence who was dwelling among them. Thus a man who touched a dead dog, or even the carcase of a clean animal, or creeping thing, was unclean only till even, and needed only to wash his clothes; whereas, the man who touched

a bone of a man (Num. 19:16)

was unclean for no less than seven days, and it necessitated his having the water of purification sprinkled upon him, both on the third day and on the seventh day. Moreover, on the seventh day it is said he shall

wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even (Lev. 11:28; Num. 19:19).

Now why this difference? Because by man came sin, and death by sin. To touch a dead body, or a bone of a *man*, therefore, is being brought into contact with death, which came by man's sin. It consequently needed that

the ashes of an heifer {Heb. 9:13},

typical of Christ's sacrifice, should be applied by

the water of separation {Num. 19:13, 20, 21}

to the man, before he could possibly be clean. And this is why it is also said, if he does not purify himself, he would be

cut off {Num. 19:13, 20}.

How terrible to be "cut off" by God. How impossible it is for Spirit-taught souls not to see the divine stamp on these wondrous Scriptures!

Besides our getting defiled by the influence of things *without*, there is the uncleanness which arises from *within*, and is of a far more serious character. Leprosy sets this forth. Two long chapters are devoted to it. It is looked at most gravely from different points of view; but wherever it was found, it imperatively called for immediate excision, as wholly insufferable in the place where God was dwelling. Ah, could we, as God's children, but have the abiding consciousness of his dwelling in us, and that the church is His habitation, with what holy fear and trembling should we speak and act! In all of these instances of uncleanness washing was indispensable for cleansing; washing thus typifying the washing of water by the Word. In some cases, particularly those connected with man in death, if only a touch of a bone of a man, it required the sprinkling of the ashes of the slain heifer to purify them, so as to restore such to God's presence. In cases of leprosy, however, whether in a man or in a house, it needed that the full typical value of the death and blood-shedding of the sacrifice,

and that which set forth the resurrection of the Lord, as well as a personal sense of the value of the blood, and the anointing oil, should be known, and the whole case judged and dealt with in the presence of the Lord, before the one who had been defiled with leprosy could be fully restored. How blessed to trace these wondrous ways of God in restoring such as have become unclean! and how the instances we have considered admonish us to be watchful, not only as to what we have communion with, but even what we "touch!"

Leprosy is a loathsome disease. It is set before us in Scripture as an illustration of the workings of fleshly lusts; for it is

deeper than the skin {Lev. 13:3}.

Like sin, its ravages are frightful; and it shows how unfit for communion, or the place of God's presence, those are in such uncleanness. In this way the instructions concerning leprosy become illustrative of that which affects "fellowship." Leprosy has been described by a popular writer as "a loathsome and infectious disease, still prevalent throughout all Syria, and corresponding in its general characteristics with that of former ages. It is called distinctively by some people, "The stroke or wound of the Lord." It commences internally, and often lies concealed for years, or is secretly spreading, before there is any outward indication of it; and after it breaks out, the sufferer often lingers for years before it reaches a crisis, and then years sometimes elapse before the leper is released by death. The bones and the marrow are pervaded with the disease, so that the joints of the hands and feet lose their power, the limbs of the body fall together, and the whole system assumes a most deformed and loathsome appearance." (Pop. Cyclop.) Mungo Park says: "It appears at the beginning in scurfy spots . . . at length, the ends of the fingers swell and ulcerate . . . the nails drop off, and the bones of the fingers become carious, and separate at the joints. In this manner the disease continues to spread, frequently until the patient loses all his fingers and toes. Even the hands and feet are sometimes destroyed by this inveterate malady."

It was because God was dwelling among a people on earth, whom He had chosen, and redeemed out of Egypt to Himself, that He would have them discern, and put a difference between clean and unclean, and be practically suited to His own presence. Leprosy was the most serious state in which an Israelite could be found; for until he was pronounced clean, and had cleansed himself, and offered certain offerings, he could *never* be fully restored. According to the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Leviticus, leprosy might be personal, affecting only an individual; or it might be

in a garment {Lev. 13:59},

affecting his personal surroundings and associations; or it

might be

in a house {Lev. 14:34},

the place where several are located, which might possibly necessitate its being pulled down, and carried out of the city into an unclean place.

Leprosy serves to illustrate either bad doctrine, concerning which it is said,

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (Gal. 5:9);

or immoral practice, about which it is said,

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump (1 Cor. 5:6).

Scripture is most decided in dealing with evil doctrine. Of those who were undermining the truth of justification by faith, the apostle says,

I would they were even cut off which trouble you (Gal. 5:12).

Another apostle charges an

elect lady and her children {2 John 1},

not to receive into her house, or even to salute, one who did not bring

the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9, 10).

Personal Leprosy

As to personal leprosy, a spot or swelling of some kind appears on the surface of the body. The question is, What is it? The God-fearing in Israel would be under considerable exercise of mind as to the real nature of the unpleasantness, because God in His word had given most solemn and decided instructions about such things. So now, looking at its spiritual significance, an unusual spot appears in a person's walk, or testimony. It is not surmise, not thinking or imagining evil against a brother, for that would be evil in God's sight; but it is a fact, that the spot has appeared. It is so manifest that the only question is, What is it? The spot or swelling having appeared, is it a temporary swelling, or red spot, like the case of one overtaken in a fault? or is there such active working of fleshly evil, so dishonoring to God, that the person must be pronounced unclean, and put away? The whole question in Israel was, Is it leprosy? not how much, or how little; for if only a spot of leprosy, he is unclean. The command of God was, if a man be a leper, he must go outside the camp, for he is unclean. He must put a covering upon his upper lip, and with his clothes rent, and his head bare, cry,

Unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him, he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be (Lev. 13:45, 46).

Then it is important to observe that a priest, either Aaron or one of his sons, was the only person in Israel competent to discern and pronounce a true judgment of clean or unclean in such cases. When there was any appearance of leprosy, the man was brought to the priest. This shows us that Christ should at once be our refuge until the case is clearly made manifest;

and it also teaches us, as we have said before, that one who is a priest is alone able to discern the real character of such matters. The case must be unmistakably proved to be leprosy before discipline could take place. When this was made sure, then the children of Israel were to put out of the camp *every leper* (Num. 5:2, 3). This was absolute and compulsory. No favor or affection was to be showed to anyone. The dearest friend or relative must be put out, if he is affected. But this solemn acting was not to be from suspicion, however strong the grounds for it might be. The case must first be clearly manifested. If there were the least question about it, the priest was to shut the man up for seven days, and then look at him again the seventh day; if he is not then satisfied, he might shut him up for

seven days more {Lev. 13:5},

and the priest shall look on him again the seventh day, when he might expect the case to be made so clear as to be able to pronounce him clean or unclean. We find this principle of declining to act before sufficient and unquestionable evidence has been forthcoming, running through Scripture. On another matter we read:

Then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and behold if it be truth, and the thing certain (Deut. 13:14).

We read also, both in the Old and New Testaments, the importance of having the assured testimony of two or three witnesses (Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). It need scarcely be added how important this principle of action is in dealing with cases in connection with the discipline of God's assembly. While diligent investigation and prayer to God to make manifest are to be commended, nothing can excuse haste in acting before the evil is most certainly made clear, rendering the person unfit for the assembly of God, until he shall be clean.

It was a priest only, as we have observed, who could discern such cases; and why? Because he was consecrated; the blood and anointing oil were upon him; and he was called and set apart for the service of the sanctuary. This, in a higher sense, every Christian is now; but every Christian is not consciously so; for some do not live on priestly food, nor do they take the place of priestly service, to which, through grace, they are entitled. And, further, as even Aaron and his sons would be unable to discern between clean and unclean, if they drank wine or strong drink, and would die if they washed not their hands and feet when they went into the service of the sanctuary, or came near the altar to minister; so now a Christian, if gratifying fleshly lusts which war against the soul, instead of abstaining from them, will not be spiritual, nor able to discern between holy and unholy. The spiritual not only acknowledge constantly that in them (that is, in their flesh), dwelleth no good thing, but are more exercised about their own souls being in communion with the Lord than anything else. As the priests had to feed on

those things, wherewith the atonement was made to sanctify and to consecrate them (Ex. 29:33),

so those only are competent to discern between clean and unclean, according to God, who really know the Lord as their Life-sustainer as well as their Life-giver. Such can truly say,

The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me {Gal. 2:20}.

He that is spiritual judgeth [discerneth] all things (1 Cor. 2:15);

and it is the “spiritual,” (not Christians, who, like the Corinthians, the apostle could only speak of as “carnal”), whom the Holy Ghost would use to restore such among us as have got wrong. When the apostle was addressing those who had through false teachers got into a carnal state, he says,

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are *spiritual* restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

For believers to be truly in the exercise of their priestly functions, they must know assuredly, like Aaron and his sons, that they have been chosen and called of God, and that they have been consecrated to the service of the sanctuary. Such know they have been washed with the water of the Word; they know that all their sins have been righteously judged, and put away by Jesus as their sin-offering; they know, too, that they are accepted in the Beloved, in all the sweet savor of Jesus as their burnt-offering; they have realized in their own souls what it is to be cleansed and set apart to God by the blood of Jesus, and to have the Holy Ghost dwelling in them. They know liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, in rest and peace, and for communion and worship. And, in a far higher sense than priests of old, they have all-sufficient direction from God, in His holy word, for every question of clean and unclean that can possibly come before them. And should perplexities arise, and they wait on and for God patiently, He will assuredly make everything needful manifest. Cases may appear at first sight to be leprous which are afterward clearly seen not to be so; and cases of apparently trivial importance at first, become afterward confirmed as leprosy. We know who alone is sufficient for these things.

Now let us look at some of these cases. We read,

The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, saying, When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising (swelling), a scab, or bright spot, and it be in the skin of his flesh like the plague of leprosy, then he shall be brought unto Aaron the priest, or unto one of his sons the priests (Lev. 13:1, 2).

A man, then, has a *swelling* in the skin of his flesh (Lev. 13:2); it is not mere suspicion, but it is a fact. There the swelling is, and it is for the priest, with God's directions in his hands, and the anointing oil upon him, to pronounce upon it. His sphere is limited to Israel; those among whom God dwelt. He had no instructions for cases among Gentiles; and so we have to judge them that are *within*; God judgeth them that are *without*.

The apostle speaks of “swellings” in a spiritual sense; of some who were

puffed up {1 Cor. 4:18, 5:2},

and of others who were

vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind {see Col. 2:18}.

Such things are sometimes seen. Self-love, self-exaltation, are at work. A person, hitherto in health of soul, becomes self-inflated, perhaps at some view he may have of a certain Scripture. He speaks of it to others. His vanity about the discovery which he imagines he has made becomes manifest. However, after a little patience, and waiting on God in prayer for him, it soon subsides. It is not heresy, but a temporary rising of self-confident thoughts, and it has disappeared. It was not leprosy; he is clean.

Or it may be he is so

puffed up,

like some at Corinth, as to exalt himself and look down upon others, because he had not committed the same flagrant sin as another. He ought rather to have “mourned.” The word is brought to bear upon his conscience, and it disappears. It is only a rising, or swelling.

Take another case.

A scab (Lev. 13:2)

appears on one in fellowship. He has been long sitting with others at the Lord's table, gathered to the name of Him who said,

There am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

The scab has such an unclean *appearance* that those who are spiritual are much exercised before the Lord about it. But what is it? It looks like leprosy, and if it be so, the person must be put out. But is it really leprosy? They bring him before the priest (the Lord), and wait on Him to make the matter clearly manifest. It is one who states what at first looks like unsound doctrine, and seems to favor laxity; but, after careful investigation, it is found that the brother only advanced something he had read in some book, without considering its serious importance; so that when he found the spiritual were seriously examining the scab, he was soon recovered. It was not leprosy. He is clean, though the scab be not yet healed. Or, another has been walking in ways *apparently* very unclean. He was seen in an idol's temple, where there is worship to demons. He was seen eating fruit there which had been offered to an idol. He says, having seen another, whom he knew to be a decided Christian, come out from the temple, he went in on that account; and, till it was pointed out to him, he did not see the dreadful wickedness the act appeared to involve. Thus he fell through the bad example of another. It is not leprosy. He is not to be so treated as unclean.

Look at another instance.

A bright spot (Lev. 13:2)

is seen on one who has hitherto been blameless. It is only *one* “spot,” but “bright” and distinct. He is excited about *one* point of doctrine of comparatively small moment. He has left the great truths and broad lines of Scripture concerning Christ, (always a sign of declension), and is quite excited about this *one* point. We once met with a Christian man, who earnestly

contended that Scripture made an important distinction between the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost; and he did not seem willing to be convinced that in the original they were the same word. In another place, a preacher in one of the sects warmly contended with us that there was a great difference in Scripture between “eternal” and “everlasting.” He would not easily yield to the fact that in the original they were the same word. These were spots -- the garment spotted by the flesh -- but not leprosy. They were not unclean so as to be put outside the camp. It may be that the “bright spot” has disappeared from each of them long ago. Or there may be a “bright spot” of moral delinquency. A brother expressed himself warmly and excitedly on a certain occasion; he had used too strong and unbecoming language; but on examination it was found to have been based on a misunderstanding, and when investigated, the matter was soon cleared up. It was not leprosy -- not the leaven of malice and wickedness.

Another case was that of a *boil*, in the skin of the flesh, a more serious thing than a spot, or a scab, or a mere swelling (Lev. 13:23). It is a work of time for a boil to go through its various stages, and at the end to prove itself to be only a foul and corrupt thing. To give examples of what seems to us to be its spiritual significance, a man exposes himself to the atmosphere of false doctrine, and not knowing his own proclivities, and the danger of such a position, he becomes somewhat infected by the poison before he is aware of it. He tries to convince himself and others that there is *some truth*, as he says, in the false doctrine; for he is ignorant of Satan’s craft to mix a little truth with error so as to deceive, and forgets the divinely-written sentence that

no lie is of the truth {1 John 2:21}.

He thinks much over the subject, talks about it, writes to his friends respecting it, becomes increasingly excited on the point, and pained also at the lack of sympathy and even attention of others; but at last, by turning to God and His word only, in dependence on His Spirit, the real state of this spiritual disorder is manifest, the corruption is exposed, the boil discharges itself of its foul contents, and it ceases to be. He had not fully embraced the leprous doctrine, and he is now most thankful for his escape from the snare. Or, a person exposes himself to the tainting influence of an immoral association. He knows little of himself. He thinks, because he desires to walk uprightly as a child of God, that he is proof against such contagion. This is a serious mistake, as many have had painfully to prove! for

evil communications corrupt *good* manners {1 Cor. 15:33}.

The best may be damaged by evil associations. May we take heed to this, and watch with self-distrust, and faith in God! Where this is not the case, the corrupting influence may so work in us as to culminate in a boil, giving pain and distress, as well as drawing out from us such corruption, as self-examination can detect, and from which self-judgment and faith only can deliver us. How true it is that,

he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption {Gal. 6:8}.

A scall (Lev. 13:29-34)

in the head, or beard, would require careful inspection to distinguish it from leprosy. The hair, setting forth our comeliness, might hide it from view. So the comely and attractive features and behavior of some, their amiable and winning ways, at times effectually hide the leaven they carry with them. It is well to be aware of this. We must never forget that leaven may hide itself under the most comely exterior.

Then there may be

white bright spots (Lev. 13:38, 39)

manifesting nothing active, which are defects and weaknesses, and not leprosy.

It is a freckled spot that groweth in the skin; he is clean (Lev. 13:39).

There may also be a *bald* spot -- a bald head, or bald forehead (Lev. 13:40, 41). It is a lack of ordinary strength, and of natural comeliness manifested by one in Israel, yet is he clean. This strikingly shows us that God looks for comely ways -- courteous and compassionate behavior; and that rudeness in word or action is like manifesting a bald spot. But whether it be a red spot or a scab, a swelling or a boil, a scall or a bald spot, it is possible that leprosy may spring up in either of them; so that if we are unguarded, and begin to give way to the indulgences and weaknesses of the flesh, or the desires of the mind, it may easily go on to such wilful activities as call for the most serious dealing that God can exercise toward man on earth. Even in a bald spot leprosy may spring up. May we be watchful and prayerful, looking off unto Jesus, who is able to keep us from falling!

On account of the variety of maladies, which, without careful discernment, might possibly be confounded with leprosy, God graciously gave these many details so as to enable the priest to distinguish between clean and unclean; and, as we have seen, they read to us many instructive lessons, and, among others, the need of patient investigation, and sure guidance, before arriving at a conclusion in such solemn matters. One thing is clear, that leprosy, when once manifested, must be imperatively and uncompromisingly dealt with, and on no account be tolerated in the place where God is pleased to dwell.

Leprosy in its nature stands alone. It is characterized by three things. It destroys, it defiles, and it spreads. Most carefully and diligently would the priest look to see

if the plague in sight be deeper than the skin (Lev. 13:3);

if so, it showed that there was a destructive process going on, that tissue had actually been consumed, that there was a deep hidden evil at work. It thus sets forth the hidden activities of sin. The workings of fleshly lusts war against the soul; and they destroy everything sacred, and Christlike, which comes under their influence. We are told,

If ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another {Gal. 5:15}.

Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died {Rom. 14:15}.

1. We are warned against

foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in *destruction* and perdition {1 Tim. 6:9}.

Evil communications *corrupt* good manners {1 Cor. 15:33}.

If any man defile (*destroy*) the temple of God, him shall God destroy {1 Cor. 3:17}.

One sinner *destroyeth* much good {Eccl. 9:18}.

The wilful activities of fleshly lusts, either of the mind, which come out in evil doctrine, or, through the members of the body, in evil ways, contrary to the revealed will of God, lie deeper than the surface, and war against the soul, thus eating out as

doth a canker {2 Tim. 2:17}

all spiritual comfort, godly purpose, and energy. With some who thus walk, it isto be feared that their

end is *destruction* {Phil. 3:19}.

2. Leprosy is defiling. The priest therefore gave deep and solemn attention to discover

if the hair in the plague had turned white {see Lev. 13:20, 25};

that is, if it had been spoiled of its natural comeliness, and become defiled. Most persons know that sin is debasing. If those who have been refined addict themselves to sinful habits, how soon they lose even their natural comeliness and beauty, and become degraded! The activities of fleshly lusts soon turn the affections into an impure direction, and defile the mind and conscience. If false doctrine be the current of fleshly energy, the mind becomes dull and darkened, and the conscience bad towards God. If immoral walk be its line, then the mind and heart become occupied with the objects of lust, and thus get away from God. Whether it be bad doctrine, or bad practice (and they are often found together), it always defiles its victims. May we be kept abiding in our Lord Jesus, that, walking in the Spirit, we may not fulfil the lusts of the flesh!

3. Leprosy is spreading. Even

a *little* leaven leaveneth the whole lump {Gal. 5:9}.

Some may be ready to say, that, because they cannot *see* its ravages it does not spread; but the character of leaven is that it works quietly and unobservedly, but most surely. The word of God assures us that leaven, even a little, leaveneth. The priest therefore carefully watched to see if the plague spread; and if it did, that would sometimes be sufficient evidence to decide the case. This would be a true sign of leprosy, whether in a man, a garment, or a house (Lev. 13:8, 57; 14:39). If, however, the leprosy cover the man all over, have covered all his flesh, then it would show that the malady had fully spent itself, and though its effects were still manifest, yet it is all turned white, so that the priest would pronounce him clean.

If a leprosy break out abroad in the skin, and the leprosy cover all the skin of him that hath the plague from his head even to his foot, wheresoever the priest looketh; then the priest shall consider: and, behold, if the leprosy have covered all his flesh, he shall pronounce him clean that hath the plague: it is all turned white: he is clean (Lev. 13:12, 13).

But when a person is pronounced to be a leprous man, he must be put outside the camp; and then his cry will be,

Unclean, unclean {Lev. 13:45}!

May He, who only is able to keep us from falling, preserve us from all evil, and from every association dishonoring to His name! What need has each to cry to our Lord Jesus,

Hold Thou *me* up, and *I* shall be safe {Psa. 119:117}?

“Leave, oh, leave me not alone!
Still support and comfort me;
All my trust on Thee is stay’d,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenseless head
With the shadow of Thy wing.”

The Cleansing of the Leper *-- Restoration*

He shall be clean (Lev. 14:20).

God only could cure the leper. When he was thus healed, he had to be pronounced clean by the priest, and also to cleanse himself in a way suited to divine holiness. The man that is to be cleansed could only be restored to the privileges of the people of Israel in the way marked out in holy Scripture.

We have seen that the greatest care was manifested, and the most diligent and clear investigation made, before a man was pronounced unclean, and put outside the camp. We shall also find that there was no less diligence and care bestowed in restoring him, so that the man himself might be happy, and that

no doubt should remain in the minds of any as to his being clean, and entitled again to all the blessings and advantages of God’s favored people. The man, too, would know that he had step by step gone over the whole question of his personal uncleanness, and had bowed submissively to the will of God as to the way of his restoration.

Sin is no trifle. Those who have walked according to fleshly lusts, so as to necessitate the severe discipline of being

put away {1 Cor. 5:13},

ought solemnly to feel the dreadful character of sin and

uncleanness in the sight of God; and such, under divine teaching, will find relief in confessing to God, and acknowledging to others, that their own judgment of themselves, and of their ways, has been according to the truth.

He that doeth truth cometh to the light {John 3:21}.

To the heathen it would appear foolish and needless to be offering sacrifices, washing, cutting off the hair, &c., before he could be properly restored to the camp of Israel; and why? Because such have no sense of its being the place of God's presence. And so now, those who have no true idea of God's people being

the habitation of God through the Spirit {Eph. 2:22},

cannot enter into the deep exercises of soul, and long continued process of sorrow and humiliation, which many who have been put away {1 Cor. 5:13}

are called to pass through, before the hand of those who are spiritual can be cordially stretched out to welcome them back. We have long been persuaded that some have much to learn on this subject of great practical moment; and may then discover why so many of those who have been brought back to the Lord's table have turned out so unsatisfactorily. The long experience of humiliation and sorrow which the remnant of Jews will yet have to pass through, before, like Thomas, they will be able to look upon the face of Jesus, and say,

My Lord and my God {John 20:28},

is another remarkable illustration that with God sin is a most serious matter. The book of Psalms, and the testimony of other prophets, plainly teach this. The tried remnant will find out that they were rightly put outside the camp, for the dreadful leprosy manifested in hating Jesus without a cause; and they will then thankfully bow to the will of God as to every step of His discipline, even in going through the great tribulation. They will afterward look on Him whom they pierced, and wail because of Him, before they are restored to their own land, and enjoy the promised peace and blessing under Messiah's rule, when every man shall sit under His own vine and fig tree, and the true David shall

reign before His ancients gloriously {in glory, Isa. 24:23}.

It is in the remnant of Israel, now leprous, and by-and-by to be pronounced clean, that this ordinance will have its complete fulfilment.

In the cleansing of the leper, he is first set before us as conscious, that, by the power of God, the foul and spreading disease has been healed, and he is standing before the priest, in order that he may be pronounced clean by him. He realizes that his discerning eye views him all over. And is it not the first point in the history of a restored soul, that the plague of sin is stopped, that he has ceased to do evil? He may be like a man white all over the skin of his flesh, the wilful activities of fleshly lusts having all come out; but they are past, the plague of leprosy is stayed. Then must we not think of such an one, that the next step in soul-restoration must bring him before our precious Lord Jesus, to be searched and known thoroughly by Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification?

And what will he learn when consciously before Him? What can one in such a state of soul learn, but that Christ loved him, and gave Himself for him? This he apprehends now in a deeper and truer way than he ever knew before. The man is before the Priest. He sees the two birds alive and clean brought out. His eye rests upon the earthen vessel and running water. He stands still. He beholds with intense interest all that passes. He looks at every movement of the priest. He sees one of the clean birds, that had just before been soaring on wing of flight toward heaven, now cruelly put to death, and its blood shed. He notices that it was killed in an earthen vessel, over running water. What does all this mean? The priest is thus setting forth the foundation truth of the gospel, that God's only way of atonement for sin is by the death of Another; and as this bird was killed in an earthen vessel over running water, so did Jesus, who died for our sins, offer Himself, by the Eternal Spirit,

without spot to God {Heb. 9:14},

to purge our consciences by His own blood. There stood the man looking fixedly on the dead bird and its shed blood, and knew that it was all for himself. Still he stands *motionless* before the priest. He next saw the priest take up the living bird, and a piece of cedar wood, a little scarlet, and a bunch of hyssop, and dip *them* in the blood of the dead bird. The priest then sprinkled him thus with the blood seven times, and pronounced him clean. Nor is this all; for the living bird (marked with the blood of the dead bird) flew away, while the man was thus pronounced clean. Now nothing, as it seems to us, could possibly portray the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus with greater simplicity, and clearness, than this ordinance; and it is here set forth because every restored soul has to learn afresh, as it were, what Jesus did for him, when He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. He has to grasp the precious fact, that all our blessings are founded on this work. Two birds are used, because one creature could not illustrate both the death and resurrection of our precious Savior. But the living one is so identified with the dead bird by being dipped in its blood, that, when it was let loose in the open field, it flew away marked with the blood of the dead bird; thus strikingly reminding us of Him who entered into heaven itself by His own blood. The cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop also set forth His personal excellencies of incorruptibility, royalty, and lowliness. Thus we behold the infinite perfections of Him who said, almost under the shadow of the cross,

Now, O Father, glorify thou Me with Thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was {John 17:5}.

In this way, the man, who had been put out of the camp for leprosy, had to learn more thoroughly than he had ever done before, that all remission, cleansing, and title to be in the presence of God, is founded on the one sacrifice for sins. It is here a fresh sacrifice, because in the economy of the law there were many sacrifices, and therefore there was a remembrance of sins instead of remission, no sacrifice being more than of twelve months' efficacy; but with us there, is but one sacrifice

for sins, and only once offered, because by it we are perfected for ever, and our sins are remembered no more. The instruction is not to us now, as is improperly said, “a fresh sprinkling of the blood”; but while the person is consciously a returning one to the assembly, such learn from the Lord, by His holy Word and Spirit, in this time of deep exercise of conscience, the everlasting value of His death and blood-shedding as cleansing from all sin, and His resurrection justifying us from all things, as well as giving us, by Him, who is gone into heaven itself by His own blood, liberty and title to be there. This we judge is the divinely-taught lesson that all learn, who are really restored to fellowship according to the teaching of the Spirit of God. Not that he did not know the preciousness of the blood before, but he now learns from the Lord, in His own presence, its purification of his conscience, and justification from all *things* in a deeply solemn way; for He only can

pronounce him clean

It is easy to put people away from the fellowship of

the Lord’s table {1 Cor. 10:21};

but the question is, Has it been done according to the Lord’s mind? If so, He will confirm the act of discipline; and how very solemn this is!

Whatsoever ye

(two or three gathered together in My name)

shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt. 18:18-20).

It is easy also to bring persons back to the Lord’s table; but the question is, Have they ceased to do evil? Do they judge that, by the power of God, they have received healing? Have they learned *of the Lord*, and in His presence, what He did for them by His death and resurrection? and have they on this ground been pronounced clean by Him? But if so, he is not restored yet; for the next words which follow are,

And he that *is to be cleansed* {Lev. 14:8}.

Though pronounced clean, he has now to cleanse himself. Such have to observe the word,

Let us *cleanse ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit (2 Cor. 7:1).

This is indeed a very solemn ordeal, but a point of great importance, and never to be overlooked.

And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean: and after that he shall come into the camp, and shall tarry abroad out of his tent seven days (Lev. 14:8).

After having thus cleansed himself, he might go into the camp; but he must keep out of his tent for seven days. He has thus gained a step in the way of restoration, though not yet restored; and this is important to keep in remembrance. No doubt this sets before us a further step in soul-restoration for communion, though, as we have said, he is not restored. To us we judge the washing of his clothes and himself in water is putting ourselves, and our personal surroundings, under the searching,

cleansing power of the word of God --

the washing of water by the Word {Eph. 5:26}.

And what exercise of soul, what thorough self-examination, what searching investigation of our near surroundings and circumstances, and unsparing self-judgment, does this involve! But how can a soul that has been letting out the sinful workings of the flesh to the Lord’s open dishonor be restored in any other way? How else could he be really self-judged before God? How could there be, without this, that

godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of {see 2 Cor. 7:10}?

Thus every step reminds us that sin is no trifle. But this is not all; for he loathes himself. His comeliness, like Daniel’s, in the presence of

a certain Man clothed in linen (Dan. 10:5),

is turned in him into corruption. He will not allow he has any comeliness or strength, for he shaves off all his hair, and for seven days walks about the camp, but knows he cannot yet enter into his tent, and there take his place as heretofore as if nothing had happened. For a full period this goes on; for seven days and nights he tarries abroad out of his tent, and on the seventh day the process of self-loathing becomes deepened. Like another, he might say,

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore *I abhor myself*, and repent in dust and ashes {Job 42:5}.

It is not merely self-examination and self-judgment, but self-abhorrence. Woe is *me!* for I am undone, I am unclean.

It shall be on the seventh day, that he shall shave all his hair off his head, and his beard, and his eyebrows, even all his hair he shall shave off: and he shall wash his clothes, also he shall wash his flesh in water, and he shall be clean (Lev. 14:9).

Thus *all* his comeliness and strength, *all* natural beauty and energy, are totally disallowed; and both himself and his near associations are again brought under the searching and cleansing power of the Word. The soul taught of God not only hates his sin, but loathes himself. He learns, not only that he has sinned, but that in him (that is, in his flesh), dwelleth no good thing. This is wrought in the soul by the Holy Ghost, who would teach us not only that Christ bore our sins, but that we were by nature so undone, unclean, and incurably bad, as to be totally unfit for the presence of God, or to be used in His service; only fit for divine judgment. For seven days the man, though conscious of partial restoration, was exercised as to his full restoration. How every step reminds us of the exceeding sinfulness of sin!

What a complete (seven days) time of self-judgment and humiliation this must have been. Let us not fail to observe, that it begins with a deep sense in the soul, learned in the presence of the Lord, the Priest, of the value of His own work for us, when He was

delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification {Rom. 4:25}.

There is no true soul restoration that does not begin from the light and power of the marvelous grace of God to us in Christ. Then he cleanses his surroundings and himself by the Word. But when he abhors himself, he goes down to the root of the matter, traces all the wilfulness and wickedness of the flesh to a corrupt and evil nature. This marked the repentance of David, and this he wrote in a book, so that his confession and self-abasement may be seen to this day in the word of God, and for the glory of God. He not only said,

I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me;

but he added,

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Thus, when he has first judged his sins in their evil fruit, and then traced them to their corrupt and evil source, he cries out,

Purge *me* with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash *me*, and I shall be whiter than snow (Psa. 51:3-9).

In this, too, we doubtless have the repentant utterances of the Jewish remnant by-and-by prophetically recorded, while it marks, in principle, the path of the Spirit in soul-restoration from an evil course. How forcibly do all these Scriptures show that sin is no trifle, as well as teach us what a serious matter it is to have to do with Him about it who is holy and true.

But the *eighth day* arrives. It is the beginning of a new order of things.

The man that is to be made clean {Lev. 14:11}

draws nearer still; for, with unblemished lambs, and meat-offering, and a log of oil, he is now presented by the priest at the door of the tabernacle -- the place of having to do with God. One he-lamb is offered for him for a trespass-offering. Thus his sin is confessed, and judged; yea, the lamb is slain in the place where he shall kill the sin-offering and burnt-offering. He knows it is for him, and it shows that his sin is forgiven by it, so that in this way he can approach the sanctuary of God.

And on the eighth day he shall take two he-lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat-offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil. And the priest that maketh him clean shall present the man that is to be made clean, and those things, before the Lord, at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation: and the priest shall take one he-lamb, and offer him for a trespass-offering, and the log of oil, and wave them for a wave-offering before the Lord: and he shall slay the lamb in the place where he shall kill the sin-offering and the burnt-offering, in the holy place: for as the sin-offering is the priest's, so is the trespass-offering: it is most holy {Lev. 14:10-13}.

After the flesh has been broken down, and self-loathing has well occupied the heart, how precious *then* the work of Jesus becomes to the soul! Not only do such realize the great truth that

Christ . . . once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust

{1 Pet. 3:18};

but they perceive that their very trespasses against God were actually judged on the Lord Himself, as our trespass-offering on the cross. While the humbled one is thus gazing on the slain lamb, he cannot but say --

"In His spotless soul's distress
I perceive my guiltiness;
Oh, how vile my lost estate,
Since my ransom was so great!"

Nor is this all. Having before learnt the *cleansing power* of the blood of Christ, he has now to learn its *sanctifying power*. He is to know not only that he is cleansed by that blood, but set apart for God by it; that he is himself sprinkled with the blood of the trespass-offering,

that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God (1 Pet. 4:2).

And the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass-offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot (Lev. 14:14).

He is now to be thoroughly alive to the fact that he is consecrated to the service of God; the ear to hearken to His word, the hand to minister in His service, and the foot to walk in His ways. The ear, and thumb, and toe, are also anointed with oil, to still further show the entire consecration to God, which becomes those who are purchased by the blood of Christ, and are anointed by the Holy Ghost. Thus we are not only set apart for God by the blood of Jesus, but anointed and strengthened for His service by the anointing of the Holy Ghost. We can readily perceive what progress there is in all this in restoration to communion. It is well, moreover, to observe that the order in the cleansing of the leper is the same as in the consecration of the priests; firstly, washed with water -- clean through the Word; secondly, sprinkled with blood -- cleansed and sanctified; and thirdly, anointed with oil -- the anointing of the Holy Ghost. This is also the order at conversion, and seems to be gone over and learnt in a more thorough way in the restoration of a soul to the enjoyment again of the presence of God. But there is a further point to be noticed here. The remainder of the oil is poured upon the head of him that is to be cleansed on the eighth day. This day is, as we have said, the beginning of a new era. Typically, we are on new-creation ground here. The man who has, under the deep sense of having been leprous, honored God in coming back again to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation in His way, in obedience to His own word, is now honored of God.

Them that honour me, I will honour {1 Sam. 2:30}

is His truth. The priest had been anointed, the prophet also, and the king; and *now* the returning one, who had been loathsome and leprous, is to be anointed also. He who had for seven days been loathing himself is now comforted and honored by Jehovah. He who had laid aside all thought of His own comeliness can now say,

Thou anointest my head with oil {Psa. 23:5}.

The remnant of the oil that is in the priest's hand, he shall pour upon the head of him that is to be cleansed; and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord (Lev. 14:18; also compare 16:32; 1 Kings 19:16).

Thus the leper in the day of his cleansing has really more honor and blessing than he had before; he is ranked with the prophet, priest, and king of Israel. How truly we prove this to be the way of our God with us! He not only restores, but He honors.

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted {Luke 14:11; 18:14}.

How often has His gracious blessing surprised us! How many times, when we have been writing bitter things against ourselves, and thought our conduct so base that He might justly spurn us from His sight, and have been seeking to hide ourselves in the dust, has His own hand been most markedly seen in bringing in fresh blessings, and unthought of honor!

How little did Peter think, when the Lord's look had so melted him, and his base conduct had so overpowered him, that he would ever again be honored by the Lord! What a look of faithful love that must have been to have made him weep; yea, weep so bitterly! Oh, how bitterly did it make him weep! How little could he have thought that not many weeks would pass before he would be able, to say,

Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over {Psa. 23:5}!

How impossible that any human mind could conjecture that the man, who, in the heat and pride of self-confidence, had boasted of his superior attachment to Jesus, and when tested had denied, even with an oath and a curse, that he knew Him, would have been put by Him in the place of distinguished honor and blessing on the following Pentecost. But in the meantime Peter had been before the Lord. The leprous spots had been under His all-seeing eye. He had keenly felt the indescribable look of Him whom he had so lately offended. What deep exercise of soul it must have given him! He also

remembered the *word* of the Lord {Luke 22:61}.

The angel's message had reached him. He had had a private audience with his risen Lord. What took place at that favoured interview we are not told; but we do read,

He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve {1 Cor. 15:5}.

One thing, as a result, is certain, that his desponding soul was begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This he tells us, and for this he blesses God (1 Pet. 1:3). As we have observed, in the cleansing of the leper, all true restoration must begin here. Again we see Peter in this solemn interval gird his fisher's coat unto him, and cast himself into the sea to go to Jesus; for he must be in His presence; he must be near Himself. He was Peter's Priest in the day of his cleansing, as well as his gracious Master. What a Priest! What a Master! Again, Peter saw His mighty power over the fish of the sea; while the fish, and fire, and coals, and the tender utterance,

Come and dine {John 21:12},

affected his inmost soul. Nor was this all; for he who had three times denied his Savior, must now, in the presence of his brethren, have the opportunity given him of confessing his true affection for Him. Peter was now so conscious that he was under the scrutiny of His all-piercing eye, and that every secret of his heart, and every turn of his crooked ways, were naked and open before Him, that he at last exclaimed,

Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee {John 21:17}!

He is then reinstated in service; he is entrusted with the care of His lambs and sheep, though prior to this he was only a fisher of *men*; and with the sentence of death in himself, he is restored to the privilege of following his gracious Master --

Follow thou me (John 21:22).

Thus, whether it be a leper in Israel in the day of his cleansing, or a fallen apostle in the way of his restoration, the principles are the same as to the only way back according to that which suits the presence of God. And it is most blessed to see, that when any have sinned away their privileges on earth, and in faithful discipline are put away from association with God's people, yet, even then, a path is still left open to faith in which they can honor God, and be honored of God. How wonderful is the grace and goodness of God! Happy they who really weigh sin in the sanctuary, in the just balance of divine truth, so as to bring themselves, and their near associations, under the searching and cleansing action of the infallible word of God.

To return to our chapter. The man that is to be cleansed is still with the priest; as we saw Peter was much in the Lord's presence. Without this, there cannot possibly be true restoration. The man

that is to be cleansed from his uncleanness {Lev. 14:19}

is still with his sacrifices

at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation {Lev. 14:11};

for how could he possibly be there without a sacrifice? The sin-offering, burnt-offering, and meat-offering are all offered upon the altar. To us the instruction evidently is, that the only ground of our really being in the presence of God is the atoning work of Christ, and acceptance in Him who is risen and ascended. He now apprehends the precious truth of the righteousness of God. This gives the heart undisturbed repose in His presence. The soul that perceives in the work of Jesus on the cross that God is just, and that His justice has been fully satisfied on account of our sin in that sin-offering, can also see that God is just in justifying him that believeth in Jesus. The sin-offering reminds us, that after Jesus had offered one sacrifice for sins, He sat down for ever, or continuously, on the right hand of God. But, in the burnt-offering, the man is taught that he is accepted in all the acceptability of that sweet-savor offering. With it the meat-offering is also offered, because it sets forth the infinite acceptability of Jesus in life, that blessed and perfect One, who always did those things that pleased the Father, whose meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. The man is accepted in all

the sweet savour of the burnt-offering; and he is now therefore pronounced clean. Every question as to his leprosy and uncleanness has been fully settled; all has been gone over between himself and Jehovah in the presence of the priest, the evil traced to its origin, and found to rise from a fallen and corrupt nature. Self-examination only led to self-judgment, and then to self-loathing. But on the eighth day -- new creation ground -- he learns, through the sacrifices offered, how righteously God now forgives sin to every one that believeth, and he enters into the divine statute:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness {1 John 1:9}.

He is now clean.

As we have said before, we have here also a picture of Israel's present leprous state, and, in Jehovah's governmental displeasure, put away from their privileges as a people, but by-and-by to know full restoration. After they have gone through deep exercise of soul, a nation will be born at once, and forgiven their iniquity; for

there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob {Rom. 11:26}.

The Leper Who Was Poor Considered

If he be poor (Lev. 14:21).

In the restoration of the man that was to be cleansed and restored to the privileges of the camp of Israel, God was so considerate of his circumstances, that a special provision was made for one who was poor. This principle runs throughout Scripture; for God looks for, and accepts from us, according only to our ability:

It is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not {2 Cor. 8:12}.

In the ordinance of cleansing the leper, this consideration for the poor leprous man in reference to his being reinstated in the camp of Israel is touchingly set forth. The ordinary sacrifices to be brought were two he lambs, one ewe lamb, three tenth deals of fine flour mingled with oil, and one log of oil. But it can easily be understood that some in Israel might be unable to procure three lambs, &c. It is therefore added:

If he be poor, and cannot get so much; then he shall take one lamb for a trespass-offering to be waved, to make an atonement for him, and one tenth deal of fine flour mingled with oil for a meat-offering, and a log of oil; and two turtledoves, or two young pigeons, such as he is able to get; and the one shall be a sin-offering, and the other a burnt-offering. (Lev. 14:21, 22).

It is well to observe here, that there is no difference whatever in the former part of the process of restoration: at his first appearance before the priest the leper has nothing to provide, whether he be poor, or whether he be rich. The two birds typifying the foundation truth of being justified from all things by Him who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, are not provided by him; he simply looks on. He stands still, and sees the salvation of God. The priest commands that the birds be taken for him. Neither is there any change for the poorest in Israel as to his cleansing himself, washing his clothes, or cutting off his hair; for it is evident that such exercises are totally irrespective of the state of a man's earthly circumstances. All through the complete (seven days) period of being under the action of the word (washing) as to himself, and his clothes, (near surroundings), and also his deliberate laying aside of all idea of creature-comeliness (cutting off all his hair), all in Israel were directed precisely alike. It is clear too, looking at the typical instruction, that self-examination, self-judgment, and self-abhorrence become every one under such circumstances. It is only on the eighth day (the beginning of a new epoch) that this difference begins, and even then there must be one lamb for a trespass-offering provided by every returning leper, be he ever so poor.

In both instances this lamb was to be waved alive before the Lord. This was the only time in Israel that it was waved alive, to show that the man who had lost all his privileges by

uncleanness did thereby confess and acknowledge his trespass, and saw it all put away by the death and blood-shedding of the spotless lamb. The application of the blood to the ear, and thumb, and toe, and also the anointing of these parts afterward with the oil, as well as the pouring of the remainder of the oil on the leper's head, were the same in every instance.

The real poverty of the Israelite came out in the sin-offering and burnt-offering. Being out of his power to provide so many lambs, God graciously accepted instead a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons, the one for a sin-offering, and the other for a burnt-offering. These the poor man brought for his offerings:

And he shall offer the one of the turtledoves, or of the young pigeons, such as he can get; even such as he is able to get, the one for a sin-offering, and the other for a burnt-offering, with the meat-offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him that is to be cleansed before Jehovah (Lev. 14:30, 31).

There are some now who are

rich in faith {James 2:5},

whose *apprehension* and *enjoyment* of the perfections and glory of Christ are far beyond that of others; but the feeblest in the faith, the most trembling babe, whose estimate of Christ, compared with that of others, would only be like comparing the value of a young pigeon with a

lamb of the first year {Lev. 14:10},

are alike accepted. Yes, God is so considerate and gracious as to accept the offerings, and to give the leper all the atoning value of the sin-offering, and to accept him in all the acceptability of the burnt-offering; not according to the measure of his faith and intelligence, but according to His own estimate of Christ, which the offerings prefigured.

We now leave the man who was to be cleansed, whether poor or rich in Israel, restored to the camp, to his tent, to his brethren, and to all the privileges of association with the sanctuary, where God dwelt. It remains for us to briefly glance at the leprous garment, and leprous house, and to hearken to the teaching of the Spirit in our contemplation of these mystic lines of divine instruction.

Leprosy in A Garment

The plague of leprosy was sometimes found in a garment. The garment so infected might be made of linen, or woollen, or skin. Our garments are not our persons, but they are our nearest associations and surroundings. A man might be personally clean; and yet have a garment defiled with leprous

spots; so now a Christian man may be personally free from deep and foul workings of fleshly lusts breaking out in open uncleanness to the dishonor of God, and yet be associated with that which is loathsome and forbidden of God.

What was to be done, when a garment was found spotted? We read,

If the plague be greenish or reddish in the garment, or in the skin, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin; it is a plague of leprosy, and *shall be shewed to the priest* (Lev. 13:49).

How important to observe here again that the first step is to bring the matter before the priest, even as we should at once go to our Lord Jesus, and bring before Him any question as to the purity of that with which we have surrounded ourselves! What trouble and sin would be spared if we were more in the habit of going to the Lord, and waiting on Him to decide for us every question of clean and unclean that arises in our path! This suspected garment was to be looked at by the priest, according to Jehovah's instructions in writing by the hand of Moses:

And the priest shall look upon the plague, and shut up it that hath the plague seven days: and he shall look on the plague on the seventh day: if the plague be spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in a skin, or in any work that is made of skin; the plague is a fretting leprosy; it is unclean. He shall therefore burn that garment, whether warp or woof, in woollen or in linen, or in anything of skin, wherein the plague is: for it is a fretting leprosy; it shall be burnt in the fire. And if the priest shall look, and, behold, the plague be not spread in the garment, either in the warp, or in the woof, or in anything of skin; then the priest shall command that they wash the thing wherein the plague is, and he shall shut it up seven days more: and the priest shall look on the plague, after that it is washed: and, behold, if the plague have not changed his colour, and the plague be not spread; it is unclean; thou shalt burn it in the fire; it is fret inward, whether it be bare within or without (Lev. 13:50-55).

Can we fail to admire here the patient waiting, and yet strict scrutiny, before arriving at a conclusion as to the real nature of the spots in the garment? How solemn to a pious Israelite must this priestly discernment have appeared -- this shutting up for seven days, then the washing and shutting up for seven days more -- and all about a garment! He surely could not fail to learn that God would have His people not only personally free from the loathsome plague of leprosy, but also without a spot on that which surrounds their persons! And is the rule for us, who are redeemed in Christ and by His precious blood, less stringent than it was with the Israelite? Are those in whom God now dwells by His Spirit, who are members of the body of Christ, to be more lax? Are we not enjoined to keep ourselves

unspotted from the world (James 1:27),

hating even the garment spotted by the flesh (Jude 23)?

Can it be according to the mind of Him who is the holy and the true, that, provided we fall not personally into sin, we need not be exercised in conscience as to our near surroundings? Far from it. The Corinthian saints were taught to touch not the

unclean thing, and were not even

to eat {1 Cor. 5:11}

with, but to put away from among themselves (think what this involves!) the wicked person; for, as we have before seen, no one can touch evil, not even a little, without being defiled.

A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump {1 Cor. 5:6; Gal. 5:9}.

And yet how many in these last days are allowing themselves to be mixed up socially, commercially, politically, and even religiously with what they admit to be evil, and yet never bring the spotted garment to our Priest for His inspection; but are excusing and even embracing the leprous robe, instead of hating the spotted garment, and burning it in the fire. We are assured that the subject is of all importance, and that few things are more damaging to true children of God at this moment than the unsound and corrupting doctrine, that, provided they are personally sound and moral, they need not be exercised about things wherewith they have surrounded themselves. Nothing can be more contrary to the revealed will of God, or few things more offensive to Him. Were His voice heard as to our *garments*, how many would soon be tested by His word? How many times they would be brought under the Lord's searching investigation! and how often He would have to say,

It is a fretting leprosy {Lev. 13:52}!

Thou shalt burn it in the fire {Lev. 13:55}!

How many an unclean association would be broken up! What ways of separation and distinct testimony for the Lord would be chosen! How many of us would find unknown blessing, if, with reference to our persons and our surroundings, we were so obedient as to do all in the name of our Lord Jesus, and for the glory of God!

The garment so spotted was not to be mended, but burnt. Such loathsome and unclean surroundings cannot be repaired, nor transferred, but must be destroyed. How many a child of God, having found himself in unclean and unholy associations, is trying to reform, to improve, or to transfer to others, yea, to do anything, so that he could be free himself before the Lord! But if it be leprosy; if it be the outward manifestation of the deep and inward workings of fleshly lusts; if, when washed by the word of God, and brought before the discerning eye of the Lord (our Priest) for His inspection, it be pronounced to be

a fretting leprosy {Lev. 13:51},

there is but one way of deliverance, and that is, giving it up, breaking up, consuming. It must be burnt with fire. May the dear children of God be more than ever exercised about near surroundings; for it is written,

Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them (Eph. 5:11).

Some spots in garments may be removed by washing (Lev. 13:58), but a leprous garment must be burnt with fire (Lev. 13:57). Some spots may be removed also by rending the defiled piece out of the garment; but if it spread after that,

it is a spreading plague: thou shalt burn that wherein the plague is with fire {Lev. 13:57}.

All these details are most suggestive. By bringing the action of the Word to bear upon our surroundings, the unclean spots may disappear, and the association may then be continued. Other spots are so manifestly leprous, that the longer they are brought before the Lord for His judgment, and washed with His searching word, the more evil and inveterate the uncleanness appears. In such cases there is but one alternative for a faithful man -- the surrounding must no longer be acknowledged; it must be completely set aside, according to the judgment of God. Oh that our souls might be more truly awakened to the fact of being so truly set apart in Christ, and through His blood, and by His Spirit, that not only ourselves, but all we put on, and everything we have to do, may be done to His glory! When we are really in communion, and happy in the Lord, how we delight to glory in Him, and boast of His love! We can point to Jesus then, and resist the devil. In the face of all our adversaries we can exultingly say --

“Prove Jesus bears one spot of sin,
Then tell me I’m unclean:
Nay, for He purged my guilt
By His own precious blood,
And such its virtue, not a stain
E’er meets the eye of God”

Leprosy in A House

Leprosy in a house is another line of instruction. It seems typically to refer to the house on earth now -- a local assembly. It did not contemplate any application till Israel got into the land. Canaan to us is typical of heavenly places; not heaven, but heavenly places; where we are spoken of as now having our standing. Though actually living on earth, we are

blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

God hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4-6).

We are not yet in heaven, but as to life and standing we are in heavenly places, and have conflict (like Joshua in Canaan) to stand consciously in this place of blessing, where God in grace has set us, and which Satan would keep us from possessing now by faith if he could. This is why the Israelites in Canaan are figurative of us while now on earth, and why therefore the instruction of a leprous house has a strong typical bearing on an assembly on earth. We therefore read,

When ye be come into the land of Canaan, which I give you for a possession, and I put the plague of leprosy in a house of the land of your possession (Lev. 14:34).

Leprosy in a house, then, was a direct infliction from Jehovah, and about it His directions were most explicit and decided. If found to be really leprous, the plague must be got rid of, even if it necessitated the pulling down of the house. This was imperative. No faithful Israelite could go into a leprous house without becoming unclean; and so now,

Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19).

In the case of suspected leprosy in a house, the first thing enjoined, as we have seen with a leprous man and a garment, was to

tell the priest.

The owner of the house being the most interested, and most responsible as to the house, was to

tell the priest, saying, It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house (Lev. 14:35).

When sin appears in an assembly, the first thing is to go to the Lord Jesus about it, and to ask Him to make manifest its real character; and those who feel responsibility to the Lord about the state of His assembly will be the persons who will do so. They will spread it all before His all-searching and omniscient eye.

Then, according to the priest’s command, there would be the greatest activity and diligence in so emptying or preparing the house, that

all that is in the house be not made unclean; and afterward the priest shall go in to see the house (Lev. 14:36).

And so now, when the Lord is appealed to, and supplicated to shew the real character of the evil, all in the assembly are troubled and moved about it, and fear, lest, if it be a case of leprosy, it should spread and infect others. If saints in an ordinary condition of things were enjoined to be

looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, &c. {Heb. 12:15, 16},

how much more care is called for when any godly soul says,

It seemeth to me there is as it were a plague in the house {Lev. 14:35}.

The inspection takes place. It is not an imaginary case, not one of mere suspicion, which Christian charity always forbids; for love

thinketh no evil {1 Cor. 13:5}.

But there are found to be on the walls of the house

hollow strakes, greenish or reddish, which in sight are lower than the wall {Lev. 14:37},

and the house is shut up for

seven days {Lev. 14:38}.

This shutting up of the house is very solemn, inasmuch as it so brings before us God’s mind as to practical holiness, that faithful ones are not permitted of Him to have to do with a local assembly in which flagrant evil is being solemnly investigated, so that it may be dealt with according to His mind. There is never uncertainty in the ways of faith. We see also, as we have been taught over and over again, both as to dealing with supposed cases of leprosy, whether personal or in a garment, that there is to be no haste in arriving at a sure conclusion in the matter.

On the seventh day, (the close of a complete period of time, when patience has had her perfect work), the house is again inspected, and the plague being found to be

spread in the walls of the house, THEN the priest shall command that they take away the stones in which the plague is, and they shall cast them into an unclean place without the city: and he shall cause the house to be scraped within round about, and they shall pour out the dust that they scrape off without the city into an unclean place: and they shall take other stones, and put them in the place of those stones; and he shall take other mortar, and shall plaster the house (Lev. 14:39-42).

This reads to us lessons plain enough. The priest commands the stones to be removed. The Lord says,

Put away from among yourselves that wicked person {1 Cor. 5:13}.

Certain persons, after patient investigation and unquestionable proof, having been found guilty of loathsome workings of fleshly activity, are therefore removed from fellowship -- put away. They are left outside in an unclean place -- the world, the place of uncleanness in God's sight. That being done, a process of humiliation and self-judgment goes on all through the assembly, when much uncleanness is scraped from the house; the old leaven being purged out, it all becomes a new lump, as the newly-plastered walls give a new character to the house. Though a stone had been removed at Corinth, yet the apostle intimates they had not

scraped within round about,

as they should have done; and he fears he would be humbled by God among them on account of it, when he comes to them again (2 Cor. 12:20, 21).

Nor does it always follow that the removal of some from fellowship would be enough. The leprosy might have more widely spread than former inspections had disclosed. The evil may have so permeated the assembly that it must be entirely disallowed, and treated altogether as an unclean place; no longer to be regarded as connected with heavenly places, or as a corporate witness on earth of Him, and His truth, who is the

holy
and the
true {Rev. 3:7}

And thus we read,

If the plague come again, and break out in the house, after that he hath taken away the stones, and after he hath scraped the house, and after it is plastered {Lev. 14:43},

THEN the house must be inspected again.

The priest must be called in again, and

the priest shall come and look, and, behold, if the plague be spread in the house, it is a fretting leprosy in the house: it is unclean {Lev. 14:44}.

It (that is the house) is unclean. It must be entirely disallowed; it must be razed to the ground.

And he shall break down the house, the stones of it, and the timber thereof, and all the mortar of the house; and he shall carry them forth out of the city into an unclean place (Lev. 14:43-45).

Does not this clearly show that a local assembly may be in happy fellowship with other local assemblies gathered to the

Lord's name, and practically acting on the ground of God's one assembly on earth, and afterwards become so leavened by allowed and unjudged evil, as to be entirely disowned by faithful saints, as no longer endeavoring to keep the Holy Spirit's unity?

It is well to notice the purity that God's order of discipline demands, while evil is being investigated and judged. If a man entered the house while it was shut up, he would be unclean till the even. If a man lieth in the house, he would have to wash his clothes; and if a man ate in the house, he

shall wash his clothes (Lev. 14:46, 47).

Such would have to bring their near surroundings under the searching, cleansing action of the word after such an impure association. How repeatedly it is said in Scripture,

Be ye holy; for I am holy {1 Pet. 1:16}.

In the instruction concerning a leprous house, there is also a provision for a house that is healed of the plague. This is the happy side of the narrative:

If the priest shall come in, and look upon it, and, behold, *the plague hath not spread* in the house, after the house was plaistered: then the priest shall pronounce the house clean, because the plague is healed (Lev. 14:48).

We know who is walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, and how happy it is to have His approval, even as to separation from what is evil in His sight. He who said to some,

Thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate {Rev. 2:6},

and to others,

Thou . . . hast kept my Word, and hast not denied my name {Rev. 3:8},

and who commended a few in Sardis because they had not defiled their garments, is

the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8}.

If, on the one hand, the heart is sad and humbled, because we find a house shut up on account of grave fears as to evil, on the other hand the spirit is relieved and cheered by the decided way in which an assembly has cleared itself; so that the Spirit's testimony as to its having cleared itself is most unmistakably made known. Though it had been a time of mourning and tears; though the removal of the stones, and putting them away in an unclean place, had been with anguish of heart; though scraping the walls, and carrying away the dust, had not been without much self-judgment and brokenness of heart; and though bringing in, according to the word of God, new material to give freshness and purity to the house had been connected with much diligent labour; yet how blessed it is, even under such circumstances, to have the Lord's approval, and to have the testimony of the Holy Ghost saying by His servant,

I have confidence in you in all things (2 Cor. 7:16).

Of the faithful at such a time it may be truly said,

Ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought

in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter (2 Cor. 7:10, 11).

The house having been healed of the plague, it remains only for the priest to make an atonement for the house, and *thus* pronounce it to be cleansed. The two birds, with cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, are used, as we saw in the beginning of the chapter, when the healed man was first brought before the priest; the house is sprinkled with the blood seven times; the living bird, marked with the blood of the dead bird, is let loose in the open fields: an atonement is made for the house, and it shall be clean. For an individual who had had leprosy, and for a house in which the plague had been, a sacrifice was offered. Both were sprinkled with blood; and, atonement being made, they were pronounced clean. Not so the garment; and why? Because *we* are looked at as redeemed by the precious sacrifice of Christ, both individually and collectively. Individually we can say,

He loved me, and gave Himself for me (See Gal. 2:20);
corporately we read,

Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it (see Eph. 5:25).

We are never told that Christ gave Himself for our circumstances, our surroundings, that with which we connect ourselves, our garments. Oh, no! But we know that, being children of God, redeemed from all iniquity, and having received the Holy Ghost, we are not to touch the unclean thing, not to connect ourselves with what is dishonoring to God. The omission, then, of any sacrifice as to a leprous garment which was never healed, and only to be consumed by fire; the long details that are given for the cleansing of a leper, first by blood, then cleansing himself, his clothes, &c., &c., for seven days, and also the atonement for a leprous house without such washings and other sacrifices, only show the perfection of holy Scripture, and the reality of its typical instruction.

That Christians have this threefold responsibility to the Lord, Scripture clearly marks out. *Individually*, we are to present our

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service {see Rom. 12:1},

and to do all for His glory, because we are not our own, but bought with a price. *Corporately*, we are to be subject to His rule who is in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, each filling up the place of a member of His body in which His grace has set us. Then as to our *surroundings*, the Word abounds with instructions in reference to family order and piety, business transactions, separation from the world as not of it, not to be yoked with unbelievers, not to touch even the unclean thing, nor to have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness. Our houses, family arrangements, social ways, necessary business, and labors of every kind, should all be done for the glory of God. The difficulty is to have such a continual sense in our souls of being redeemed, and of our

standing in Christ in all His acceptability, and of having God dwelling in us by His Holy Spirit, as to answer to His desire in all our various obligations to Him. How often you see a man careful about his own soul, but with personal surroundings unclean! Or, you may see another most zealous for the truth in a corporate sense, and yet loose as to his circumstances. What need have we to cry,

Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe {Psa. 119:117}!
for --

“It is the Lord, enthroned in light,
Whose claims are all divine,
Who hath an undisputed right
To govern me and mine.”

As it is clear that discipline in regard to God’s assembly on earth, can only be carried out, according to the Lord’s mind, by such as are really gathered together in His name, we propose in our next paper to consider what Scripture teaches on this important point.

In {Unto} What Name Are We Gathered {Together}?

Where two or three are gathered together in {unto} my name,
there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20).

This is the only place in Scripture where these precious words are found. The Lord was speaking of the Church, or Assembly. Matthew's gospel is the only one which mentions the Church. The reason is obvious. Matthew's line of truth treats of Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. This is why His title to the throne, birth in Bethlehem, and some other testimonies of the prophets, are exclusively found there; and why the sermon on the mount, parables of the kingdom, and the prophecies as to the future of the Jews, Christendom, and Gentiles, are here so fully given. In a word, Matthew's gospel sets forth in detail that

Jesus came unto His own {John 1:11},

gave continual proofs of His Messiahship, and was there able to bring in the kingdom; but

His own [the Jews] received Him not {John 1:11}.

Instead of the nation welcoming Him, only a few fishermen and women, and some others, received Him as the Messiah; they were thus on kingdom ground, and partakers of His blessing. The people held a council to destroy Him, so that He eventually gave them up as

a wicked and adulterous generation (Matt. 12:14, 45; 16:4).

Such being the case, it seemed a fitting time for our Lord to bring out what had been

kept secret since the world began {Rom. 16:25},

that He purposed to bring in another order of blessing, quite distinct from Judaism -- His Church. He said therefore to Peter,

Upon this rock I will
(not I *have* built, or I *do* build, but I *will*)
build my Church {Matt. 16:18}.

What the Church or Assembly was, is not revealed till Paul's apostleship (Eph. 3:5); only, on giving up the Jews for a time as a people under the governmental dealings of God, He would do another thing --

I *will* build my Church (Matt. 16:18).

Whatever types and shadows of the Church there may have been in the Old Testament, this is the first time in Scripture that it is plainly spoken of. Afterward, in the eighteenth chapter, when speaking of one brother having trespassed against another, He again mentions the Church, or Assembly, as being in the place here, not of infallibility, but of authority as to discipline. In this the Lord clearly teaches that the power of all authority in the discipline of erring ones here, as well as also the secret of success in united prayer, is His being

in the midst of them.

For where two or three are gathered together in {unto} my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:15-20).

It is important to observe, though these words are only found here, that there is a remarkable allusion to them in reference to a case of assembly discipline at Corinth --

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, &c. (1 Cor. 5:4).

Perhaps few passages of Scripture are more frequently quoted throughout Christendom than the verse we are now considering, though apparently by many little understood. It is often misquoted. We have heard it said, "Where two or three are *met* together in my name," but it is not Scripture; and it is sometimes added, as if it were part of the verse, "and that to bless them." Again, referring to this verse, one has said, "We meet in the name of Jesus"; another, "We meet simply in the name of Jesus"; or, "The name of *Jesus* is sufficient for our meeting"; but neither of them are Scriptural statements. Jesus said,

My name.

The question therefore is, "What is *now* His name?" Some also begin a letter with "Dear brother in Jesus," and end it with "Yours in Jesus." And though we do not doubt that such mean well, yet a moment's reflection on the truth of Holy Scripture would show that we were not in Him in the days of His flesh, but are in Him risen and ascended; and, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, we are united to Him there who has been made both Lord and Christ. We never read therefore in Scripture of our being in Jesus, but in

Christ Jesus,

or

complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power {see Col. 2:10}.

We do read of them which sleep in Jesus, but it should be

through Jesus {1 Thess. 4:14, see New Trans., JND}.

It is a point of great importance to souls as to whether their thoughts are continually revolving on Jesus as He was on earth, (most blessed in its place,) or occupied with Christ Himself glorified, our life and righteousness, and in whom we are, through marvelous grace, accepted and blessed.

Instead therefore of its being said *met* together in my name, our Lord said,

gathered together in my name {Matt. 18:20}.

For us to *meet* together implies the activity of our wills; to be gathered together

implies the putting forth of another power, a Gatherer; and so it is. The Holy Ghost on earth, during our Lord's absence, draws us unto His name, giving us the sense and enjoyment of being around Him who is in the midst. It is not a voluntary

association of men, but a distinct action of the Holy Ghost drawing our hearts to that most precious name, to which the new life we have received delights to come, under the guidance of the Spirit, and the word of truth. How solemn, and yet how unspeakably blessed it is, thus to have the consciousness of being

gathered together

by the Spirit of God! But while this action of the Holy Ghost in gathering together would include those who are in Christ, it necessarily excludes all who are not in Christ; for how could they be truly gathered together in His name in whom they have not believed? What an untrue thing it would be! How this one Scripture demolishes every idea of mere human confederacies and associations for the Lord's work! Surely the Holy Ghost is the Testifier and Glorifier of the Lord Jesus during His absence, and thus, to those who know Him, His

name is as ointment poured forth {see S of S 1:3}.

Jesus said,

Where two or three are gathered together in {unto} *my name* {Matt. 18:20}.

The question for every heart is, Are we gathered together *in His name*? for this surely excludes every other name. How solemnly and sternly did the Holy Ghost, by the apostle, rebuke the first sound of one believer saying,

I am of Paul,
and another,

I of Apollos!

He appeals at once to them as members of the body of Christ, and asks,

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:12, 13).

It was not that they purposed to give up meeting in the name of the Lord Jesus, but only to adopt their names, perhaps as a mark of respect to Paul and Apollos. This, however, is decidedly resented, and declared to be carnal, and not spiritual. Some might not have apprehended the satisfying and absorbing value of being gathered unto His name, and others might have lost the freshness of it. It is difficult to know how any Christians, who have tasted the comfort and power of being gathered together unto His name, could tolerate the substitution or addition of another name. Did we not know that schism, or sectarianism, is a work of the flesh, we should have thought it impossible. Alas! what is man?

When the Lord mentioned His Church or Assembly, He was referring to what was future, well knowing what would take place as to His death, resurrection, and the descent of the Holy Ghost. Immediately after saying,

I will build my Church, &c.,

it is said,

From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day (Matt. 16:21).

It is said

from that time forth,

because the Church could only be founded upon His death and resurrection, and formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost after His exaltation to the right hand of God. This change in the calling, standing, and essential characteristics of the Church of God, as contrasted with Israel, is why the place of worship, whether Jerusalem or any other place, is no longer the question, but whether we are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It must have appeared strange to Jews to have heard the Lord thus speaking of His own name as the center of gathering. They might have thought, "Why such silence about the gorgeous temple, and all its imposing ceremonials? Why is all this passed by?" Little did they imagine that their beautiful temple was so soon to become a heap of ruins, and a desolation.

His own {John 1:11}

nation having rejected Him,

His own

would thenceforward be those few who had

received Him {Luke 10:38, 19:6};

and the beautiful house of God on earth being desolate for Judah's sin, the

Father's house {John 14:2}

would be that which would henceforth engage their hearts. Everything is thus changed. Instead, therefore, of being gathered together in the place of goodly stones, as God's house on earth, a spiritual order of things has supplanted the worldly sanctuary; so that now those who are truly gathered according to the Lord's mind are gathered together in (or to) His name.

What are we to understand by

my name?

For now He has a name above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. His name is now no longer

Jesus only {John 12:9};

for Peter said to the Jews,

God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

This is why, in 1 Cor. 5., it is not, as we have sometimes heard, "gathered in the name of Jesus," but

in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 5:4}.

The difference is of immense consequence to souls; for those who speak of "meeting in the name of Jesus" have Christ as He was on earth before them, and are like His disciples on earth, who were really on kingdom ground, which is not where the truth has put us. The being gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ connects our hearts with Christ in glory, where He now is, and now only is known; and there we may be sure the Holy Ghost, the Glorifier of Christ, directs us. Judaism having been laid aside for a time, this new order of things, formed by the coming of the Holy Ghost, and

energized by His indwelling power, is brought in; so that now the name of the Lord Jesus is to be associated with everything. We are gathered together in His name; to ask the Father in prayer in His name. Whatsoever we do in word or deed, is all to be done in the name of the Lord Jesus. The apostles wrought their miracles in His name; and by-and-by, at the name of Jesus every knee in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, shall bow, and to Him every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (John 16:23; Col. 3:17; Phil. 2:10, 11).

We have dwelt a little on being gathered together in {unto} His name, because, of the careless way in which many seem to regard these words of our blessed Lord; and because we judge it necessary that their true meaning should be apprehended, if we would really enter into what follows,

There am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

It is only when truly gathered in His name, that we are really able to count upon His presence.

His being

in the midst

is something special. It is more easily realized than expressed. The eye of faith discerns Him; the unbelieving see Him not. His being

in the midst

of a company so gathered must not be confounded with the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. All who have the Spirit -- the other Comforter -- have Him for ever.

He shall abide with you for ever {see John 14:16}.

He is always dwelling in us individually, and in the Church on earth, even when not assembled together. It is a mistake, then, to suppose that the Holy Ghost is only present when gathered together in the Lord's name. No doubt He is there, and the power of all ministry and worship. But

there am I in the midst of them

is a conditional fact, and not the Lord (as some have said) present by the Holy Spirit, but the Lord in the midst *in spirit*, though personally seated on the Father's throne. It is most happy to enjoy His presence thus. Is there anything of a collective character at all comparable to it on earth? Is it not the most heavenly kind of collective blessing that we can know on earth?

In order to our being gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in the full enjoyment of His presence

in the midst,

we must know Him --

- (1) as the One who has accomplished our eternal redemption;
- (2) as the One who has sent down the Holy Ghost;
- (3) as the One who is the Head of the body -- one body;
- (4) as the One who is walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, to whom we are individually and corporately accountable;
- (5) as the One who is soon coming to receive us to

Himself.

There are other aspects of our Lord which might be added to this list; but those would be recognized by such as are in any measure settled in the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ.

1. What liberty of soul the knowledge of His being in the midst gives us, who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood! Those who look at such gatherings as a means of grace in order to obtain salvation, are wholly wide of the Lord's mind. Knowing that we *have redemption* in Christ and through His blood, we joyfully remember Him who redeemed us at such a cost; and being assured we are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and having received the Spirit of adoption, we

worship the Father in spirit and in truth {John 4:23}.

We *remember* that Jesus *was* for us on the cross, we see that He *is* for us in the glory, and we *look* for His *coming again*, when we shall

ever be with the Lord {1 Thess. 4:17}.

How is it possible that unbelievers could share in this, however amiable they may be? Scripture rather contemplates

an unbeliever {1 Cor. 14:24}

coming into such an assembly, and being so struck at what he saw and heard, as to

fall down and declare that God is in you of a truth {see 1 Cor. 14:25}.

This we know has sometimes been the happy testimony of such.

2. The One who said,

There am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20},

has sent down the Holy Ghost. Before He left the world Jesus said,

When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, &c. (John 15:26),

thus promising to send the Holy Ghost; and in Acts 2 we read, Jesus

therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear (Acts 2:33).

The Holy Ghost, then, has been

sent down from heaven {1 Pet. 1:12},

consequent upon the finished work of Jesus, and, as we have seen, is to abide with us for ever. This is not merely a spiritual influence, or an emanation from God, but the Holy Ghost Himself, who is one with the Father and the Son. We are builded together (not gathered together, but builded together) for an habitation of God through the Spirit. God is, therefore, dwelling in His people on earth. Individually, He dwells in our bodies, and has been sent into our hearts; collectively, the Church is

the temple of God (1 Cor. 3:16, 6:19; Gal. 4:6).

What a wonderful fact, that a divine Person dwells in us! God's presence, therefore, being with us, what gravity, what obligations as to holiness, and what devotedness, are necessarily involved! How is it possible that any could be truly gathered together in the Lord's name, who are not conscious of being cleansed from their sins by His blood, and, consequently, being the present abode of the Holy Ghost on earth?

3. The One who is in our midst is the Head of the body -- the Assembly. As risen and ascended, He is seated at the right hand of God, who

gave Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who filleth all in all (Eph. 1:20-23).

How can we, then, be rightly thinking of Him now as in the midst, without

holding the Head {Col. 2:19}?

This was the cause of so much failure with the Colossian saints. The apostle referred to some who were

vainly puffed up in their fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from whom all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God (see Col. 2:18, 19).

Thus the One who is in our midst draws out our hearts, while adoringly occupied with Himself, towards every member of His body on earth, and makes us sensible of our own place of privilege and service as members of the

one body {Rom. 12:4, 5},

and of one another. Thus

holding the Head {Col. 2:19},

each member of His body becomes an object of our interest and love. Every circle narrower than this is refused by the faithful as sectarian, and every circle larger than this plainly bears to them the character of a mere human association and confederacy. To such also the loud boast of usefulness fails to dislodge the heart from fidelity to Him who is in the midst of those thus gathered to His name. So weighty is this in the light of Scripture, that the

one loaf

on the Lord's table is the standing witness of the

one body.

For we being many are one bread [loaf], and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread [loaf] (1 Cor. 10:17);

and elsewhere all saints are enjoined to

walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness, and meekness, and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep *the unity of the Spirit* in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit (Eph. 4:1-4).

We find, too, that our Lord, in His commendatory prayer to the Father just before going to the cross, earnestly desired that all who should believe on Him through His disciples' word might manifest unity. He said,

That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20, 21).

Above all, we know that one object of the Savior's death was, that He might

gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:52).

Thus the prayer of Jesus, His death on the cross, the place of headship given to Him in ascension, the action of the Holy Ghost sent down to baptize all believers into one body, and His operation in us for keeping the Spirit's unity in the bond of peace, all show that the One who is

in the midst {Matt. 18:20}

of those gathered together in His name, has the highest interest in our practical acknowledgment of

one body
and

one Spirit {1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4}.

How else could we be intelligently gathered around Him who is the

Head
of this

one body {Col. 1:18}?

Is not, then, the abandonment of

the name of the Lord Jesus {Col. 3:17},

as the only center of gathering, for that of an ecclesiastical building, the very rejection of Christian ground for the adoption of a Jewish order of things? How dear to the heart of Jesus, and how precious to Him the relationship of those must be, who are spoken of by the Holy Ghost as

members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30}!

Need it be added, that there is no other membership recognized in the teaching of the apostles?

"One Spirit with the Lord;
The Father's smile of love
Rests ever on the members here,
As on the Head above."

4. If the Lord is thus known as

in the midst {Matt. 18:20},

and the power of the abiding Spirit duly regarded, how could there be in those so gathered the absence of dependence, reverence, and the consciousness of being under divine guidance? Who, if summoned by the Queen to a favored audience, would dare to prescribe what should be done during the honored interview? And could we render less homage to Him who is

in the midst

were our souls in the realization of this gracious fact? Impossible that there could be room for any human order of arrangement in such a presence. Nothing is more clearly revealed than that He, as Son over His own house, the One whom John saw

in the midst of the seven candlesticks {Rev. 2:1; see Rev. 1:12-18},

holds us accountable to Him in a *corporate* as well as in an *individual* capacity. Almost all the epistles, but especially the second and third chapters of Revelation, show this. To those gathered together in His name He looks for conduct suited to Himself; and that prayer, worship, ministry of the Word, or whatever takes place, shall be according to His mind, and in the power of the Holy Ghost, who divideth

to every man severally as He will {1 Cor. 12:11}. (Read 1 Cor. 12.)

There is no room here for fleshly wisdom. Man in the flesh is not recognized; only saints in Christ. The first is entirely unknown here. This marks the holiness of the ground, as well as its dignity. Had we a truer, deeper sense of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, of the Lord Jesus in our midst, and of our being a new creation in Him -- members of His body, what reverence, what felt weakness and utter helplessness in ourselves would there be; and what power of the Holy Ghost would be realized, while He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us! Whether it be a question of personal conduct, or of edification, or of discipline, the one thought of paramount importance must be as to what suits Him --

the holy and the true {see Rev. 3:7}

-- who is in our midst. If, in dealing with others, both as to binding and losing, we have His mind, how can it be otherwise than the fulfilment of His word,

Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven:
and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in
heaven {Matt. 18:18}.

This, our Lord's wonderful way of ratifying in heaven what is thus done on earth according to His will, not only brings us into very close association with Himself, but cannot fail to invest us with a most solemn sense of the holiness of the ground on earth, on which He has graciously set us during His absence. May the Lord give us all a deeper sense of His own mind in all these things!

5. That He is coming again must ever be the recurring thought and expectation of those who are consciously gathered together in His name. His thrice-repeated,

I come quickly {Rev. 22:7, 12, 20},

in the last page of inspiration, must make us sensible of the possibility that each time of being so gathered on earth may be the last, or that our gathering together unto Him at His coming may take place the next moment. When Jesus presents Himself as

the Bright and Morning Star {Rev. 22:16},

we know that

the Spirit and the Bride say, Come {Rev. 22:17}!

These are only a few of the many lines of instruction which we believe are comprehended in our Lord's words,

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there
am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

They are of growing importance, because of the bold and appalling way in which Christendom is appending His precious name to accredit most unscriptural doctrines and proceedings. Some who hold and propagate the most blasphemous doctrines of the day claim the place and name of Christians; and the modern Phariseism, and revival of Jewish doctrines, are professedly associated with Christ and Christianity.

Those who are spiritual, and are kept in the love of God, will perceive in this brief Scripture there is not the least recognition of man in the flesh; the all-attractive Object is Christ.

There am I in the midst of them

is all that is said; and this is enough for faith; for faith only can take hold of the truth of God, and

we walk by faith, not by sight {2 Cor. 5:7}.

Observe that this inestimable blessing, and the power too in dealing with others, are for even

two or three

thus gathered together. How encouraging to those who desire to be here for the Lord in these last days! What a clear line of demarcation it lays down between being thus gathered together according to the Lord's mind, and being occupied with mere traditions and confederacies of men! May we, through grace, be true to our Lord till He come.

The Peace-offering Or the Communion-offering

It is the food of the offering made by fire unto Jehovah (Lev. 3:11).

Those who look to the offering of Christ on the cross for no other reason than to have *peace* with God come far short of the Lord's mind. But those who do know Him as having made peace through the blood of His cross, and as having obtained eternal redemption for them, find it their sweetest employment, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, to have to do with Him for *communion*. The first three chapters in Leviticus are most inviting to us as to this; for they not only shadowed forth the perfections of Jesus when on earth, but also the sweet savor Jehovah found in Him both in life and in death. In neither of these chapters is the subject sin-bearing; though it be true, both in the burnt-offering and in the peace-offering, that a life was sacrificed, blood was shed, and sprinkled round about upon the altar, because God's way of blessing us, or of communion with us, could be founded on nothing less than the precious blood of Christ. Even in the glory this will be had in everlasting remembrance. All these offerings, when tested by the fire of divine holiness, only brought out that which was a sweet savour unto Jehovah. As long as souls are thinking only of their own safety, of what Christ did in the death of the cross to save sinners, there may be *peace*; but unless they are beholding Him by faith who is now in the presence of God for us, there will be little consciousness of *communion*. Beholding Him now glorified, and having the comfort of being always

accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6},

and

complete in Him {Col. 2:10},

we are free to look back upon the cross, remembering Him there, and entering into the love of God, and the grace of the Lord Jesus, by the communion-power of the Holy Ghost. We can then, as the Spirit of truth may graciously guide, find delight in thinking of the Father's purposes and grace in Christ, and the personal glory and perfections of Him who accomplished redemption; what He is to the Father, what He is to us, and all the relationships and offices He now so perfectly sustains.

In the first chapter of Leviticus, the unblemished victim set forth Christ as

the burnt-offering {Lev. 1:3}.

It was so called because the fire was always burning --

The fire shall ever be burning on the altar; it shall never go out (Lev. 6:12, 13).

Of this offering, not only the fat, but every part was burnt. Even those parts naturally unclean,

the inwards and the legs {see Lev. 1:9},

were washed in water, to be a fit type of Him, who, inwardly,

in thought, feeling, desire, affection, as well as outwardly in walk, was always well-pleasing to the Father. In the burnt, or ascending offering, the whole victim, when tested by fire from heaven, the searching fire of divine holiness, was a sweet savor, a savor of rest to Jehovah. It gives us God's estimate of the perfect surrender, and infinite acceptability, of Christ in death, who was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It is not here sin-bearing, but another aspect of the death of Christ for the glory of God; and as that death was for us who believe on His name, we are accepted in all the acceptability of the offering --

accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6}.

As the man who brought it put his hand upon its head, thus identified himself with the offering, and was told,

It shall be accepted for you {see Lev. 1:4},

so the one who now approaches God by the one offering of Christ is accepted in all the acceptance of Christ Himself. Precious truth for our souls! *But* in the burnt-offering, be it observed, no one had part with God. It is the entire surrender of Jesus to God. The priest that offered it had the skin for himself (Lev. 7:8); because all we can now possess of the burnt-offering is what was externally manifested; the inward perfections of devotedness, and every other activity for the glory of God the Father, He only could truly estimate. While the knowledge of the truth set forth in the burnt-offering, then, delights our hearts in the Lord, and furthers communion, yet in it no one could partake; all was for God. This view of the perfectness of Jesus enjoins us to follow in the same path of unreserved obedience, and to

walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour (Eph. 5:2).

In the meat-offering, we have not the shedding of blood, but that which set forth the perfect acceptability to God of the man Christ Jesus in the days of His flesh. It was composed of fine flour, oil, and frankincense. The

fine flour

represented the spotless purity and evenness of Jesus;

oil

was *mingled* with it to typify Him who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, or the oil was *poured* on the flour to remind us of Him who was anointed by the Holy Ghost; while the

frankincense {Lev. 2:1}

foreshadowed the excellencies of the man Christ Jesus. A handful of the fine flour and all the frankincense was burnt upon the altar, and was a sweet savor to God; for all the trial and testing only brought out from Jesus, according to divine

holiness, that perfectness in which Jehovah could find a savor of rest. Every thing in Him, every act and word, every step He took, all the activities of that blessed Person, were for the glory of God. The remainder of the meat-offering was to be eaten by the priests, Aaron and his sons. It was food for God's priests. They were to eat it in the holy place.

The meat-offering was to be offered without

leaven,

because nothing corrupting could be a type of the pure and spotless Son of God, whose flesh saw no corruption. No

honey {Lev. 2:11}

was to be mingled with the meat-offering, because it was not mere amiability, a natural sweetness which soon becomes sour, which characterized the man Christ Jesus, but perfectness as man according to God.

Salt {Lev. 2:13}

was to be mixed with every meat-offering, that the incorruptible and savory qualities of Jesus might be marked.

As priests unto God, believers now feed on Christ,

the bread of God {John 6:33},

the bread which came down from heaven {John 6:41}.

It is the spotless and perfect One, whom the Father sent, who said,

The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world {John 6:51}.

How blessed this is! What precious thoughts of communion are here spread before us by the hand of God, That the priests should eat of the same

fine flour

and

oil

of which a part, with all the frankincense {Lev. 2:1-3},

had been a sweet savor to God, is wonderful indeed; and that the deep reality of the type should find its fulfilment in the Son of God -- in Him who was

the bread of God,

the One in whom the Father found real delight -- and yet that it should be presented to us, as

the bread which came down from heaven,

for our sustainment as well as life, is surpassingly marvelous. But such is the case; for by entering into the perfection and excellencies of Christ when on earth, and also His walk and service, as set forth in Scripture, in which He glorified the Father, we have fellowship with the Father; and while eating of this living bread, we have fellowship with Him who was

a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief {Isa. 53:3}.

The bread,

said He,

that I will give is my flesh . . . he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in Him {John 6:51-56}.

How precious to our souls it is to be thus occupied with Christ! and how rich the grace that has brought us into it!

It is, however, to the peace-offering that we must look for further lessons on communion. It has been called by some "the communion-offering." It was a sweet savor offering; for it did not set forth Christ as having been made sin for us. The victim was unblemished, killed, and its blood sprinkled round about the altar; because it foreshadowed Christ, and all our blessings are founded on His death. There never could have been communion between the Father and us, unless we had been reconciled to God by the death of His Son; there could have been no liberty to enter into the holiest but by the blood of Jesus.

The peace-offering might be of the herd either male or female, or it might be a lamb, only it must in either case be without blemish. The smallest blemish would render it unfit to be offered; for it could not then portray the holy, spotless Son of God. The directions as to this were most stringent, though anything superfluous, or lacking, would not render it unfit for a freewill-offering. We read:

It shall be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no blemish therein. Blind, or broken, or maimed, or having a wen, or scurvy, or scabbed, ye shall not offer these unto the Lord, nor make an offering by fire of them upon the altar unto the Lord. Either a bullock or a lamb that hath anything superfluous or lacking in his parts, that mayest thou offer for a freewill-offering; but for a vow it shall not be accepted {Lev. 22:21-24}.

The male bullock, or a female bullock, that which was weaker, or a lamb, that which was of less worth, teach us that the measure of our communion depends on the estimate we have of the perfections and worth of Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us; though communion would be known, but in a lesser degree, by those who have a weaker apprehension of the personal qualities and worth of the sacrifice. This is comforting.

Again, before the peace-offering was killed and eaten, the offerer must be conscious of his identification with it by having laid his hand upon its head. It was then killed before Jehovah

at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation {Lev. 3:2};

or, if a lamb, or a goat, he killed it before the tabernacle of the congregation. So every believer now looks back on the death of Jesus, and knows that Christ died for him, to bring him to God. He has now, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, rest, and is at home in the presence of God.

Let us well ponder these points. Communion is founded on the death and blood shedding of the Son of God. Without it we must have for ever been outside His presence. The veil was not rent till Christ died. The blood too was not only shed, but sprinkled

upon the altar round about {Lev. 3:2};

and we can be before God in the peaceful consciousness of the blood of sprinkling, which speaks to us of liberty to draw near, to be inside the veil with boldness. What a holy ground is here laid for communion! What a way of righteousness, as well as

of perfect peace! How it invites us to

draw near {Heb. 10:22},

as well as to

come boldly {Heb. 4:16}!

No doubt, as we grow in the knowledge of the personal glory, perfections, and moral excellencies of Christ, our communion will be enlarged. This is why some saints have a deeper character of fellowship than others; though a feeble apprehension of Christ, and of the value of His blood, as that on which peace and communion are founded, are often in true-hearted souls connected with great joy in the Lord, and an earnest, worshiping heart.

The true ground of communion having been laid in this typical offering, we then find communion itself most blessedly established. Jehovah had His part, the priest his, the son of Aaron who sprinkled the blood had his part, the offerer also fed upon the sacrifice, and as many others as were welcomed to the feast.

All the fat is Jehovah's, and certain inward parts were also offered by fire. It was called

the food of the offering made by fire unto the Lord {Lev. 3:11}.

We read,

He shall offer of the sacrifice of the peace-offering, an offering made by fire unto the Lord; the fat that covereth the inwards, and all the fat that is upon the inwards, and the two kidneys, and the fat that is on them, which is by the flanks, and the caul above the liver, with the kidneys, it shall he take away. And Aaron's sons shall burn it on the altar upon the burnt sacrifice, which is upon the wood that is on the fire: it is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD (Lev. 3:3-5).

Observe here that the LORD (Jehovah) had His part first, and that part was the inward worth and excellencies of the victim; for He only knew, or could estimate, the real worth and inward energy and affection of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is an important point to notice; for we may be assured that those who are walking in fellowship with the Father seek His glory and His things *first*. Those whose principle is to attend to the things of God after they have done their own things know little of communion, even if they do of peace. The Lord had the first and the best of the offering, because He only could enter into the infinite depths of His worth; and those who know His grace delight to honor God, and to do all for His glory!

We see this principle often brought out in Scripture. In olden time, the children of Israel spent the first and best of their time and energy in gathering the manna which God provided for them. In the Proverbs it was written,

Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase (Prov. 3:9).

When God provided for the maintenance of the priests, besides parts of the various offerings, it was written that

the *best* of the oil, and all the *best* of the wine, and of the wheat, the *first-fruits* of them which *they shall offer unto*

the LORD, them have I given thee (Num. 18:12);

which gives us another example that the first and best of all we are, and have, are to be devoted to God. In judging of our own state, it is perhaps scarcely possible to over-estimate the importance of the question, whether we are in the habit of rendering to God our *first* and *best*?

Besides

the food of the offering {Lev. 3:11},

the inward parts and fat being tried by fire, and all coming up to the Lord as

a sweet savor {Lev. 3:5},

we find that if any of certain peace-offerings were left till the third day they were burnt.

The remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire (Lev. 7:17).

This shows how guarded God was as to communion; that it was confined to Himself and those who could have communion with Him; so that any part that was left should not be used by any one, or for ordinary purposes, but be burnt. We see the same principle brought out elsewhere:

They [the priests] shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, to consecrate and to sanctify them: but a stranger shall not eat thereof, because they are holy. And if ought of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire (Ex. 29:33, 34).

There was the same strict injunction with regard to the paschal lamb:

That which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire (Ex. 12:10).

Nothing can more clearly show that communion is confined between God and His own people; and those who enter into it by the power of the Holy Ghost know that the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. It is not to be wondered at, then, that the apostle should have written,

What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

To return to the offering. As we have seen, Jehovah had His part, and when tried under the action of fire was a sweet savor unto Him. The remainder was eaten. Aaron and his sons, typical of the Church, had

the breast {Lev. 7:34}.

The priest who sprinkled the blood, who thus foreshadowed the Priest in heaven, had

the right shoulder {Lev. 7:33}.

The man who brought the offering, and those he associated in fellowship with himself, partook of the remainder. It is a remarkable picture of communion, all having joint participation in the same offering.

There was, however, the strictest injunction that

all that be clean shall eat thereof {Lev. 7:19};

that is, an Israelite who was defiled would be disqualified for eating the peace-offering. If he partook of it while his defilement was not judged and cleansed according to the direction of Scripture, he might come under the severest judgment of God in being

cut off from His people.

But the soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace-offerings that pertain unto the *Lord*, having *his uncleanness upon him*, even that soul shall be *cut off* from His people. Moreover the soul that shall *touch* any unclean thing, as the uncleanness of man, or any unclean beast, or any abominable unclean thing, and eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace-offerings which pertain unto the *Lord*, even that soul shall be *cut off* from His people (Lev. 7:19-21).

How guarded then an Israelite had to be, lest, through carelessness, he should do that which would bring down such severe judgment of God upon himself.

And looking at communion as taught in the New Testament by the apostle Paul, we find that

many {1 Cor. 11:30}

came under the Lord's discipline, both in being afflicted with sickness, and cut off, because they did not judge themselves as to their walk and state in partaking of the Lord's Supper. They did not discern the Lord's body. Hence we read:

For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:29-32).

How impossible, then, it is that we can be in communion with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and with one another, with careless, unjudged walk! It was not self-examination with the people to see if they were Israelites, for that was their birth condition; nor is it self-examination with us to discover whether we are children of God, for that was for ever settled when we were born of God by faith in Christ Jesus; but, as an Israelite, who had uncleanness upon him, by reason of having touched what was defiling, had to be cleansed from it, and made clean before he ate of the peace-offering, so we have to be clean when approaching the Lord's table, or to enable us to be in communion with the Lord as to anything else. How blessed it is to know that, having been perfected for ever by the one offering of Christ, when we do, as God's children, sin, it is a question then, not of eternal condemnation, but of communion; and through the advocacy of the Lord Jesus, and the action of His word and Spirit on our souls, we are bowed before Him in confession, and cleansed by the Word, so that we are again restored to communion with Him

who is the holy and the true.

It is of the most importance that our souls clearly enter into this; for however we may abound in knowledge and gifts, and speak forth high-sounding doctrines, nothing can go on well or profitably, either individually or collectively, if we are acting while uncleanness is upon us as if there were nothing amiss. Happy those who, like the offerer, can wave before God the virtues and excellencies of Christ, who loved us, and gave Himself for us; and can feed upon His perfect love and almighty power to us-ward, as

the breast

and

the right shoulder

so sweetly set forth.

Surely our hearts are filled with abiding consolation and strength for service and worship, when we know the sweetness and power of such precious fellowship. Communion with one another flows out of this; for walking

in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another {1 John 1:7},

and

the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? {1 Cor. 10:16}

What a wondrous privilege to be thus known and enjoyed on earth! Yet let us never forget the impossibility of its being really known by any, even of God's children, who are careless as to unjudged evil. If evil thoughts, and carnal ways and words, unclean and unholy desires and associations, be tolerated by us instead of bowing us in the dust before God in humiliation and confession, let us not be surprised if leanness of soul be our portion; or the Lord's rebuke and chastening overtake us, because He loves us, and has separated us unto Himself from this present evil world. It is well when self-examination leads to self-judgment, and then to self-loathing. The eyes of our heart become then wholly fixed on the glorified Son of man.

A peace-offering might either be

for a thanksgiving {Lev. 7:12},

or

a vow, or a voluntary offering {Lev. 7:16}.

The offering

for a thanksgiving

must be offered with a meat-offering,

unleavened cakes mingled with oil,

a shadow of the perfect man Christ Jesus, as conceived by the Holy Ghost;

and unleavened wafers anointed with oil (Lev. 7:12),

reminding us of that blessed One who was anointed with the Holy Ghost; and cakes mingled with oil and fine flour fried, setting Him before us in His sufferings. Observe thus far the entire absence of leaven, because it might express the perfect purity of the humanity of Christ. Then, besides these things,

he shall offer for his offering *leavened bread* with the

sacrifice of thanksgiving of his peace-offerings
(Lev. 7:13).

And why do we now have leaven? Surely not to express what Christ was, but what we are; for even in our thanksgivings to God our Father we still have that in us -- the flesh -- in which dwells nothing good. When we have glorified bodies, there will be the entire absence, and for ever, of all evil; but now leaven, that which is corrupt and evil, is so in us, that as God's children we are enjoined to lay aside all malice, &c. Moreover, a peace-offering for thanksgiving was to be eaten the same day in which it was offered, because in approaching to render thanks our communion will not be long continued.

He shall not leave any of it until the morning {Lev. 7:15}.

With

a voluntary offering {Lev. 7:16}

the communion is continued longer; it might be eaten for two days. But no peace-offering was allowed to be fed upon for more than two days, because if the offerer and the friends he invited continued to live upon it day after day, it would look like a person slaying an animal for his own feasting, instead of bringing an offering unto the LORD. Besides, we doubt not that the third day in Scripture often refers to resurrection. We therefore read that

the remainder of the flesh of the sacrifice on the third day shall be burnt with fire. And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace-offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth it shall bear his iniquity (Lev. 7:17, 18).

What a picture of communion is presented to us here! God finds a savor of rest in the part offered to Him; the priest who sprinkled the blood, typical of the Priest in heaven, had his part; Aaron and his sons, shadowing the Church, had their part; while the offerer and his friend's also fed on the same offering; what was left was burnt with fire. Can anything more touchingly set forth what communion now is? What nearness to the Father, what joy, what thanksgiving, what worship, must be associated with this joint participation of that one Object which has so perfectly pleased and satisfied God!

How all these details speak to us of reality! Though divine grace has called us, saved us, and set us apart for God by the blood of Jesus and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, yet He, to whom we are now brought, is holy. Still He says,

As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:15, 16).

While rejoicing in Christ Jesus, in whom we are complete in *standing* and nearness to God, may we be so conscious of all the provision He has made for us, as to be preserved from carelessness about our *state*, and, by Christ,

offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name {Heb. 13:15}.

Pasture
For The Flock of God

by
H. H. Snell

London:
W. H. Broom, 25, Paternoster Square.
1875

Preface

This volume is sent forth with the hope of helping souls. It contends for the authority of Scripture, and calls attention to important parts of divine truth. Most of the papers are notes of addresses given in various places. With all their defects, the desire has been to comfort and edify God's dear children, to whom, we trust, by God's grace, they may not be altogether unacceptable.

In these days, when uncertainty as to the things of God is pervading so many minds, when ignorance and unbelief are sacrificing the essential doctrines of Christianity to modern ritualism and philosophy, when almost every thing civil and ecclesiastical is being shaken, it seems of all importance that those who are born of God should be established and built up in Christ. Those who love the truth, who enter into and enjoy their present standing and acceptance in Christ, who realize the personal indwelling and operations of the Holy Ghost, and the blessed hope of the coming of God's Son from heaven, find much comfort and blessing; and, moreover, escape many snares which those who are looking to men and their opinions must necessarily fall into.

To the gracious and abundant blessing of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, these pages are now prayerfully commended.

17, *Eyre Street, Sheffield.*

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Safety Through The Blood; Or, Israel in Egypt

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt (Ex. 12:12, 13).

God's sentence of judgment had gone forth. Death was declared against the firstborn throughout all the land of Egypt. His testimony by Moses had been again and again rejected; and now God's hand must smite and cut off. His long-suffering had ran its course. He had repeatedly manifested His displeasure, but it had been unheeded. His patience could no longer endure. He said,

All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die . . . and there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt {Ex. 11:5, 6}.

Thus death was threatened throughout all the land. God declared it should be. This was enough. His word must stand. The result we know.

And so *now* the word of God speaks of coming wrath and judgment. God's message of abounding grace in the gospel has been sounding for a long time in men's ears. Many have rejected it. Few believe the record God has given of His Son; and inevitable judgment is pending.

The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness {Rom. 1:18}.

The solemn verdict has been announced,

Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31};

and the Executioner is coming.

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

It is certain, then, that the wrath of God is coming, and that it is only a question of time as to its execution. Then surely will be sudden and everlasting destruction, and they shall not escape.

Nor could it be otherwise; for men are not only by nature unclean, but practical transgressors, rebellious, unfit for God's presence. Every trial has only proved their unclean and insubject condition. God tried man first in innocence; then as having a conscience and without law; then under law with many privileges, priesthood, prophets, kings; after this by the personal ministry of His beloved Son; and now by the ministry of divine grace by the Holy Ghost. But all have proved man to be evil and insubject to the will of God. Early in man's course

God's testimony was, that

the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man are only evil, and that continually {see Gen. 6:5};

and still the divine declaration is, that

the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:7, 8).

This is God's verdict, and the sentence is final. Whether men agree with it or not, it is God's righteous estimate of fallen man. And if men in their natural state do not and cannot please God, how can they be fit for His holy presence? The ways of men invariably prove the wilful and insubject state of their hearts; for if God commands, he disobeys; if God loves, man hates. If God sends His Son to bless and save, they hate Him without a cause; they reject Him, saying,

This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours {Luke 20:14}.

If God preaches peace and remission of sins, they will not believe. As, therefore, the judgment of God upon the Egyptians could no longer be withheld because of their hatred of God and His people, and rejection of His word, so the coming wrath is inevitable because of man's enmity, and wilfulness, and continual insubjection to God and His truth.

But let us not fail to notice that before the judgment actually came upon the firstborn in Egypt, God did, in His great love and pity, proclaim by His servant the way of safety. So He does *now* by the gospel, blessed be His name! The people of Israel were told to search for and take a lamb without blemish. This was the first thing. It must be without a spot, in order to be a fit type of Him it was intended to represent, who would hundreds of years after this be found here as the holy, pure, and perfect Lamb of God. Then, observe, this spotless, unoffending lamb must be killed, because nothing could meet our need less than the death of the holy Son of God. Most pure and perfect as His life was, yet had He stopped short of death, whatever other sufferings He had endured, no one could have been saved. It was absolutely, imperatively necessary that Jesus should die; for the wages of sin is death; and, blessed be God, Jesus did die -- He

died for the ungodly {Rom. 5:6}.

This was His perfection, He was

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}.

For this, too, He came down from heaven; for He

was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death {Heb. 2:9}.

Then, on the cross bearing sins, and forsaken of God because our sins were upon Him, He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. However precious the life of Jesus was -- and most precious it was to God, and is to us -- yet His

death, the shedding of His blood, the laying down of His life, became necessary to meet the holy and righteous claims of a just God against sin to deliver us from its guilt and condemnation, in order, too, that

we might be made the righteousness of God in Him
{2 Cor. 5:21}.

But all this in the antitype God has provided. He has found a Lamb without spot, and according to His own purpose and counsel He has been slain. He died that we might live –

“The Prince of life in death hath lain,
To clear me from all charge of sin;
And, Lord, from guilt of crimson stain
Thy precious blood hath made me clean.”

And it is the death of Jesus that the apostle Paul first calls attention to when speaking of the gospel which he preached --

I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,
how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures
(1 Cor. 15:3).

But true and blessed as it is that Christ has been delivered for our offences, died for our sins, and shed His blood for many, it may now be asked what benefit has it been to us? Many will tell you that they know that Christ died, and shed His blood; but if you press them as to what it has done for *them*, they will perhaps be unable to say. Why is this? Because they only know these points as historical facts, and have never availed themselves of that precious blood for their own soul's safety. Hence we are further told that the Israelites used the blood. This was their faith. God told them to take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood, and sprinkle the lintel and the two side-posts of their houses with the blood, and then to go inside and rest in perfect peace. This is the vital point in this most beautiful narrative. We should not fail to notice the places where the blood was to be sprinkled -- the lintel and side-posts of the doors. It was to be exalted by them, looked up to as is certainly the case now with all who really value the blood of Christ. We know that mere professors would put it on the threshold, because, with all their boasted profession, they *practically* trample under foot the Son of God, and count His precious blood unsanctifying. The Israelite had to place it as it were between him and God, and to know its protecting power also, both on the right hand and on the left. And what can be more assuring to the true believer now, than knowing that he looks to the blood of Christ as between him and God, and that God looks upon him as under its precious sin-cleansing and justifying safety?

But suppose they had said, “The blood is not enough,” or, “It cannot be expected that they would be sheltered *only* by it,” would it not have betrayed rank unbelief? But they believed God. They availed themselves of the blood. They gratefully took God's way of shelter. Their safety was in the blood. They sprinkled the lintel and door-posts of their houses, and were safe -- unquestionably, perfectly safe. However sinful, ignorant, and unworthy, yet being underneath the shelter of the blood they were safe. However pious they might have been, their safety was not in their piety, but in the blood. Kind and benevolent acts and self-sacrificing ways, however commendable in their place, did not in the least help their

security; for it was only through the blood. For God had said,

The blood shall be *to you for a token* upon the houses where ye are: and when *I* see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt {Ex. 12:13}.

Thus their safety was wholly in the blood; it was to be to them “for a token.” And God declared that when He saw the blood He would save all who were under its blessed shelter. How charming and how simple this is! God did not say, when I see your doings, or feelings, or hear your prayers -- no; but “when I see the blood.” No bars or locks, however numerous or powerful, could have excluded the messenger of God's judgment; but the blood on the lintel and side-posts was enough. The people might have been young or old, moral or immoral, learned or ignorant, but, having taken refuge beneath the blood-sprinkled lintel, they were perfectly safe. How anxious every believing Israelite must have been to get all his household inside the house marked with the blood! Cannot you imagine some of them asking why they might not go outside the door? and the loving parents saying, “Because God's terrible judgment is coming, and He has promised safety to those only who are in houses which have been marked with the blood of the lamb.”

Again, you may easily conceive there were some inside the blood-stained door-posts who were the subjects of doubts and fears, and otherwise lacking comfort. Why? Because they forgot that *all* their safety was in the blood. If they were taken up with self, their own doings, feelings, fitness, and the like, they would surely be unhappy; but if their minds and hearts rested on the two things God had given them -- *the blood for a token, and His word for assurance* -- they would find it an effectual remedy for all doubts and fears. Trusting, then, wholly in the blood, and relying only on what God said about it, would be enough to keep them in perfect peace. And so now, God declares that Jesus has *made peace* by the blood of His cross, and He now *proclaims peace* to every one that believeth. And those who do believe, trusting only in the blood of Christ, and relying on what God says, that

whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish {see
John 3:15 16},

they *have peace* with God. Oh yes, God's testimony to the all-cleansing virtue of the blood of Jesus is the remedy for all doubts and fears. That precious blood withers up all fleshly confidence, and silences every accusing of conscience; for it tells of sins judged and cleansed. The blood speaks to us of God's perfect love, even when we were dead in sins; it tells us of peace made, of redemption accomplished, of a new and living way into the holiest, of title to everlasting glory.

Being sheltered by the blood is the *vital point*. Many stumble here, and the mistake is fatal. They are lost, for ever lost, because they reject the blood of Jesus as the only ground of peace and safety; for

“Nothing can for sin atone,
But the blood of Christ alone.”

They say they are sinners, and that Christ is the Savior; but they do not avail themselves of the value of His death. They do not take shelter in His blood as the alone way of safety. This

is unbelief. It is refusing to hear Him that speaks from heaven, God has declared that

without the shedding of blood is no remission {see Heb. 9:22};

that

it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins {Heb. 10:4};

that

in Christ we have redemption through His blood {see Eph. 1:7, Col. 1:14};

and that

the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all sin* {1 John 1:7}.

Therefore it is clear that no sin is too black for that precious blood to wash away. Oh no;

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul {Lev. 17:11};

and happy indeed are those who, taking shelter before God in the blood of Jesus, so rely on His testimony to its perfect efficacy as to be unquestionably assured of perfect safety. Oh the blessedness of God saying to us, Ye are

NOW JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD {Rom. 5:9}!

Remember, then, what God said to those who took Him at His word, and relied on the sheltering power of the blood of the lamb. He told them two things. First, that the blood (mark, not their feelings, nor opinions, nor even prayers, but the blood), and the blood only, was to be the token to them of their perfect safety. Come what might, they were to think of the blood, and be in peace, because they were sheltered by it.

The blood shall be *to you* for a *token* upon the houses where ye are {Ex. 12:13}.

This is most blessed. It is the perfect cure for every doubt, or question, or suggestion of the enemy. The divine assurance was of perfect safety, because of the blood. Secondly, God said,

When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt {Ex. 12:13}.

Thus God acted in virtue of the blood. He did not say, when I see your feelings or doings. Oh no; but “when I see the blood, I will pass over you.” Thus we see that the blood answers every claim of God, as well as meets every need of our souls. They were not only in their houses perfectly safe, but they were also entitled to know it, and to be in perfect peace about it.

And what then? Did God leave these people thus safe to do their own will, follow their own opinions, and live as they liked? Or did He prescribe occupation for them as thus secure and separated off for Himself by the blood? Most assuredly He did. He set three things before them, all of which have a solemn voice of instruction to us.

First, they were to put away all leaven out of their houses. Now leaven in Scripture will always be found to represent what is evil. They were thus to separate themselves from all evil. They were to hold to nothing that was unsuitable to God.

His word is,

Be ye holy: for I am holy {see Lev. 11:45, also 1 Pet. 1:16}.

So now, being purchased by the blood of Jesus, we are God’s; to be for Him always; to show forth the characteristics of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We are to depart from iniquity, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all for the glory of God.

Secondly, they were to

eat of the flesh of the lamb roast with fire {see Ex. 12:8}.

This was their happy occupation, and it loudly admonishes us as to the need of communion with Him who

loved us, and gave Himself for us {see Gal. 2:20}.

Nothing can go right with us if communion be neglected. We are called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. They might have remembered the sufferings, death, and bloodshedding of the lamb, they might rejoice in their present safety, but they were to be occupied with and feed on the lamb that had been slain. Particular parts of the lamb were specially noticed as provided for them --

His head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof {Ex. 12:9}.

And we cannot fail to notice in these words of the Holy Ghost, that it is our privilege to have communion with our blessed Lord as to His mind, as we understand “his head” teaches us. Thus should we be not ignorant, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Intelligently entering into His counsels, purposes, and thoughts, as revealed to us in the word and by the Holy Ghost, is one of our highest present privileges. To be able to say, without fear of contradiction, that

we have the mind of Christ {1 Cor. 2:16},

and

know the things that are freely given to us of God {1 Cor. 2:12},

because

the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God {1 Cor. 2:10},

was what an apostle was wont unhesitatingly to pronounce as characterizing the saints of God. Oh the blessedness of thus having communion with the Lord as to His mind and will!

By “his legs” we understand His walk. This also, by the Spirit, through the word, it becomes us to enter into; for He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps -- walk as He walked. And I ask, Can any exercise exceed the blessedness of tracing the steps of the blessed Son of God while here? At one time we see Him in a solitary place, or spending a whole night in prayer; at another preaching early in the temple. Sometimes we behold Him disputing with doctors, or in controversy with rationalistic Pharisees, or infidel Sadducees. Again, He is found by the side of the lake of Gennesaret or walking Jerusalem’s streets, exposed to the temptations of Satan or the hatred of wicked men; He is sitting down in a Pharisee’s house to meat, or talking to a crowd of

thousands; or sitting alone on Samaria's well with an enquiring sinner, or sailing along the sea of Galilee in a boat. In public or in private, every step was obedience to the Father's will; every word that escaped His holy lips the Father gave Him to say; every act was such a manifestation of the Father that He could say,

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father {John 14:9}.

Ah, this was true and perfect; all was fruit in due season; but to enter into it, enjoy it, and gather comfort and strength from the believing contemplation of it, is a privilege indeed!

But they were to feed on the "purtenance" also -- the inward part. And so the affections of Christ are laid open to us in the precious word of God, and the Spirit delights to take of the things of Christ and show unto us. We know that He did love indeed; that whom He loved when He was in the world, He loved them unto the end; that He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; and that it was when we were enemies, ungodly, sinners, that He so loved us as willingly to die for us. We know that His heart is so set upon us that He is always in spirit with us, and will never leave nor forsake us; that the same loving heart, though now beating on the throne of God, is ever and unceasingly occupied in ministering to us and caring for us. And so ardently does He long to have us in the glory with Him, that He has not only promised to come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be also, but His heart still says,

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory (John 17:24).

It is thus entering into the affections of Christ, and enjoying His love, that our hearts are lifted up in adoring worship, and rise superior to all the distressing circumstances which may cross our path. Let us not fail to see, then, that during this present time, before the coming of our Lord, it is our happy privilege to be occupied with the thoughts, the walk, and the love of that Lamb who is now in the midst of the throne as it had been slain.

Thirdly, there is also another point of deep practical importance. They were to eat it in haste; not as those who were settling down in Egypt. On the contrary, they were to be ready to move at the Lord's command. Their position was to be one of entire subjection to the will of God, ready to go at His bidding. We read:

Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's Passover {Ex. 12:11}.

They had to feed on the lamb with girded loins, staff in hand, and shod feet. They were a distinct and practically separated people from the Egyptians -- consciously the Lord's, and in a position ready for whatever He pleased. True it is there was no *singing* in Egypt as there was afterwards on the other side of the Red Sea, nor was there *fighting* as when beyond Jordan; but there was conscious peace, shelter from judgment, separation from evil, feeding on the lamb, and the expectation of leaving Egypt for ever and dwelling in the land flowing with milk and honey.

And how is it, dear fellow-Christians, with our souls? Are we peacefully enjoying the shelter of the blood, and resting on the precious assurance of God's unerring word? And in the sweet comfort of this, is Christ everything to our hearts -- our strength, our joy, our never-failing resource? Are we truly realizing that because we are the redeemed of the Lord we are ready to go, to stay, to wait, to serve, to be wholly and unreservedly His? Oh the blessedness of this rest of soul! nay, more, the enjoyment of the thoughts, the love, the ways of Christ Himself! And though all our joys here, however pure and spiritual, are mixed with human elements of bitterness -- bitter herbs -- yet we must find Him to be the spring of joy, the strength of life, the true never-ending source of all that is pure and blissful. Thanks be unto God for

the precious blood of Christ {1 Pet. 1:19}!

"The perfect righteousness of God
Is witnessed in the Savior's blood;
'Tis in the cross of Christ we trace
His righteousness, yet wondrous grace.

"God could not pass the sinner by;
His sin demands that he must die:
But in the cross of Christ we see
How God can save, yet righteous be.

"The sin is laid on Jesus' head;
'Tis in His blood sin's debt is paid;
Stern justice can demand no more,
And mercy can dispense her store!

"The sinner who believes is free,
Can say, 'The Savior died for me';
Can point to the atoning blood,
And say, 'This made my peace with God.'"

Deliverance; Or, the Red Sea

The Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians;
and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore (Ex. 14:30).

To be safely sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood of the lamb, was the precious lesson taught by the passover. But many a soul has great distress, and becomes subject to the assaults of the adversary, even after having taken refuge in the blood of Jesus as the only shelter from the wrath to come. To be really trusting in the atoning work of Christ, as the alone foundation of peace and safety, is one thing; to know deliverance from self, and the world, and Satan, is another. Hence many souls have deep conflict, and are longing for deliverance, as they say, from the plague of their own heart, because they do not see how wondrously God has wrought this for them in the work of Jesus on the cross, as their *substitute*. It may be through much soul-conflict and distress that some are brought so entirely to look out of self as to fix the eye of their heart *only* upon the Lord Jesus; but this very sorrowful experience is usually turned to good account. All who are taught of God must surely be instructed according to the divine word, that

the flesh profiteth nothing {John 6:63},

and sooner or later learn in their experience something of the truth, that

no flesh shall glory in His presence, and he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord {see 1 Cor. 1:29, 31; 2 Cor. 10:17}.

Conscious shelter then from the wrath to come some have, who know not the enjoyment of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. It is this latter subject which this chapter brings before us, and it is of the deepest importance to our souls to learn clearly from Scripture the Lord's own mind concerning this great deliverance. It is most remarkable that the place of the occurrence of this scene should be Pihahiroth, for it means "the entrance into liberty"; and the end of this chapter, and the singing which followed, tells us what a time of unprecedented happiness and rejoicing it was.

They had learned in time of deepest trial the safety afforded them by the blood of the lamb, according to the word of the Lord. He had indeed passed over them. While death, with its attendant miseries, by the messenger of God's judgment, was in every other house, yet in virtue of the blood of the lamb they had been preserved. Thus kept in safety by the blood, and brought out of Egypt by the power of God, under His peculiar guidance, the pillar of cloud over them by day, and pillar of fire by night, it was not till they came to the borders of the Red Sea that their fears and anguish appear to have began. What immediately gave rise to it was lifting up their eyes and seeing the hosts of Pharaoh, his mighty men with their chariots and horses hotly pursuing them. The waves of the Red Sea rolling before them, and the king of Egypt with his armed soldiers immediately behind them, they found

themselves in such circumstances of peril and distress as they never expected, and for which they were totally unprepared. At once their minds became occupied with themselves, their dangers, and their enemies; in fact, their circumstances. Their misery was intense. They wished they had never left Egypt. They murmured against Moses. We read,

When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel *lifted up their eyes*, and, behold, the Egyptians *marched after them*; and *they were sore afraid*: and the children of Israel *cried out unto the Lord*. And they said *unto Moses*, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness (Ex. 14:10-12).

Such were the expressions of distress and misery which the children of Israel now gave forth, and it reminds us of another utterance of later date,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?
{Rom. 7:24}.

Their case seemed to them so hopeless that they contemplated dying in the wilderness, and regretted they had ever left Egypt; they said that they actually preferred the cruel bondage of serving the Egyptians, to their present fear and anguish at the prospect of being wholly exterminated by Pharaoh and his hosts.

But is it possible that these are the same people who only a short time before had personally experienced that they were objects of divine favor, and before whom went to lead them, the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night? Yes, they are the same people; and though they called unto the Lord, when they *lifted up their eyes* and beheld the vast multitude of Egyptian soldiers marching after them, they murmured against Moses, despondingly spoke of dying in the wilderness, and wrongly judged themselves worse off than when made to serve the Egyptians with rigor at the brick-kiln. In short, they never were so miserable before. It is a vivid illustration of what many a soul passes through now. The picture is not overdrawn. It is a life-like delineation, for it is drawn by a divine hand, and abounds with most instructive lessons.

The fact is, that what at first usually brings a soul to realize its need of the Savior is the sense of guilt on account of sins committed. The burden of known transgressions, and therefore of deserved judgment, is so intolerable that the distressed heart cries out,

What must I do to be saved? {Acts 16:30}

and is rejoiced to find shelter in the blood of Jesus shed for the remission of sins, The joy is often very great at finding in the cross of Christ that God is both

a just God and a Saviour {Isa. 45:21},

and hope therefore of eternal salvation lights up the dark scene where before only gloom and despondency had occupied the soul. Like the children of Israel in Egypt, they happily experience the sheltering value of the blood, and flatter themselves with the idea that they will never be unhappy again. So on they move in their Christian career. They tread a new path. They realize, too, that God is with them. Their backs are turned upon this Egypt world, and with their faces toward the promised rest --

the land flowing with milk and honey {see Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:15; Jer. 11:5; Ezek. 20:6}

-- they go onward, according to their knowledge of the will and guidance of God, little suspecting what is so soon and so deeply to try them.

A question, as yet unknown to them, must sooner or later exercise their consciences before God. Hitherto it was the transgressions they had knowingly committed against an infinitely holy, sin-hating God, as we have noticed, that had distressed them; and this they knew had all been met for them, and their souls were happy in believing in the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus. But now the question is about the flesh (prefigured by the Egyptians, men of flesh), the nature from which all transgressions spring; or, as Scripture calls it, our "old man." The fact is, the old nature, that which is born of the flesh, is totally unfit for God's presence or His service; and to learn this experimentally cannot but be very distressing. To accept the doctrine because we see it in Scripture is simple enough; but to work it out in God's sight, that

in me, that is, in *my flesh*, dwelleth no good thing {Rom. 7:18},

is very humiliating. This was not in the least suspected by many of us when we first gladly accepted the shelter which the precious blood of the cross gave to our sin-stricken souls. Still, it has to be learned that the nature that did the sins, the old man, is so totally and irremediably bad -- not subject to God, neither indeed can be -- that the only way which God could deal with it was to judge it, and put it thus away out of His sight. The distress connected with this second lesson is often far greater than the distress of the first. Still, it is the way of learning deliverance, and the only way, as I judge, of entrance into the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

When the soul that has known remission of sins through the blood of Jesus finds *within*, every now and then, an innumerable host of lusts, and pride, and murmurings, and complainings cropping up, and even if they do not *break out*, are ready at any moment to do so, the heart is ready to say, "Am I a Christian? Am I not deceived? I thought Christianity would make me always happy, and yet I am so miserable! I never supposed a real Christian could have known such abominable and unclean workings within as I have. Surely I am worse now than when I was in bondage to sin, and Satan, and

the world. Besides, resolutions do not drive these things out. Neither do ordinances eradicate them. They recoil after the severest bodily mortifications and self-denial. They boldly intrude in my prayers and holiest exercises. Now and then they lie dormant, but spring up again on the smallest occasions. No one knows this but myself and God; for I am speaking of workings within. I cannot overcome them. So that, distressed and almost ready to give up my profession of Christ's name, I cry out, 'O wretched *man* that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'" Now, observe here, this is not, "O wicked sins that I have done!" but,

O wretched *man* that I am! {Rom. 7:24}.

It is

the flesh, with its affections and lusts {Gal. 5:24}

-- the nature that did the sins. And when our souls realize these evil workings within, headed by the power of Satan, threatening to have dominion over us, it becomes to us as clear and formidable an host as Pharaoh and his horsemen and army were to the timid and distressed children of Israel. And as nothing could pacify them but *deliverance* from this mighty power which was against them, and contrary to God, so nothing less than the setting aside in judgment of these hosts of evil within could meet the requirements of our consciences, because we know that nothing less could satisfy an infinitely holy God. And this, as we shall see, is what Scripture teaches us has been done. Blessed be the God of all grace!

Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and *see* the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you to-day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace {Ex. 14:13}.

Here we see that God Himself would deliver them from this mighty host of flesh, and from Pharaoh its leader, and that by His own power, without any help whatever, or struggle, or interference of man, He would do it all completely, and for ever. It should also be their comfort and blessing to look and *see* what God did; and so when a soul has learned its thorough helplessness for overcoming flesh and Satan, and mastering self with its ten thousand forms of deceitfulness and desperate wickedness, and at last gives completely up, and cries out,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}

he is taught by the Holy Spirit that God has delivered him through Jesus Christ our Lord. And looking back upon Him when hanging on the cross, and viewing Him now as risen from among the dead, he is led triumphantly to reply to his own question,

I thank God through Jesus Christ {Rom. 7:25}.

He really knows what it is to "stand still" to "see" by faith a risen Savior, who was crucified, and he gives praise to God.

It is well to see how fully God has met our need in the accomplished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only did Jesus once *suffer for sins* the just for the unjust, but He, the holy One, was *made sin* for us; and we are told that God condemned

sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}

in Him. So that not only sins, the fruit unto death of an evil nature, have been suffered for, in that Jesus shed His blood for many for *the remission of sins*; but “sin in the flesh,” the nature that did the sins, has been so judicially “condemned” by God, and set aside as no longer to have a place before Him, that the Holy Ghost declares that our

old man

(observe here it is not old sins, but old man)

is crucified with Him {Rom. 6:6}.

And so completely is this recognized in Scripture that believers are now said to be “not in the flesh,” but “in Christ Jesus.” But what I want now to trace in Scripture is, that God has not only judged sins on Jesus on the cross, who purged them by His blood, but that He has judicially set aside as only fit for judgment our “old man” in Jesus our substitute, as truly as He swept away in judgment Pharaoh and all his hosts, so that the children of Israel might see them dead, and for ever after reckon them dead, and no longer living.

In tracing the narrative in our chapter, we shall see that all is accomplished by the power of God. It is redemption by *power*. In Egypt it was redemption by *blood*. In Christ crucified, risen and ascended, we have both.

In whom we have redemption *through* His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace {Eph. 1:7}.

The blood must be the basis of all our blessing.

Without the shedding of blood is no remission {see Heb. 9:22}.

But we want more than remission of sins; we need to be brought to glory, and it is the work of Jesus to

bring many sons to glory {see Heb. 2:10}.

It needed the power of God to bring those who had been sheltered by blood, not only clean out of Egypt, but to deliver them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, by bringing them through death and judgment on entirely new ground. Just as we are now, in Christ risen, not only rescued from this present evil world, but delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, and put on entirely new ground, the other side of death. Looking back upon the cross, we see it has all been accomplished through death and judgment; so that death and judgment are now behind us; risen life in Christ possessed by us, for we are risen with Christ; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We, who were of the world, in our sins, in the flesh, and it may be under law, are *now* spoken of in Scripture as

not of the world {John 15:19, 17:14, 16},

washed from our sins {see Rev. 1:5},

not in the flesh {Rom. 8:9},

not under law {Rom. 6:14, 15; Gal. 5:18},

but

in Christ {1 Cor. 1:30; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 1:1, 2:13; Phil. 1:1; 1 Pet. 5:14}.

All this may be traced in this scene of the Red Sea, the waters of death, forming to man’s eye an insuperable barrier to his

ever entering the land. But by the power of God the waters of the Red Sea were divided so as to form a dry path, with a liquid wall on either side. The children of Israel were commanded to

go forward {Ex. 14:15}.

All now that was needed was faith, in order to avail themselves of the value of this work of God, to pass through according to His word. This they did.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land {Heb. 11:29}.

They gladly accepted God’s way of deliverance.

The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand, and on the left {Ex. 14:22}.

Thus they crossed the Red Sea. But what of their enemies which they so feared? The very work of God that was to His people their deliverance and salvation, was the very work that for ever put away through death and judgment their enemies from their sight, so that they never saw them living afterwards. And does not all this bring home forcibly to our soul’s remembrance the accomplished work of Jesus? When we think of deliverance from sin and Satan, death and judgment, where do we look? Did He not

through death destroy him that had the power of death {see Heb. 2:14},

which is the Devil? Was not our “old man” -- the flesh, with its mighty hosts of affections and lusts, crucified with Him? And now, having life in Him who is out of death, risen with Christ, cannot we see death and judgment behind us, as surely as Israel saw the tumultuous waves of the Red Sea rolling behind them instead of before them?

But let us never forget that God judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians, the men of flesh. With hearts filled with bitter enmity to the things and people of God (for such is the flesh -- see Rom. 8) the Egyptians hotly pursued after Israel. Like the carnal man still, they rushed madly and unconsciously into the very jaws of God’s devouring judgment. So fatally ignorant and dark is man. They appeared to succeed for a little while. The counterfeit of faith in those men of flesh *seemed*, too, to prosper for a moment. But, alas! alas! God was against them, and not for them. They had *not* believed God. They had not the shelter of the blood. God marked their evil ways, and, as usual, He took the wise in their own craftiness; for God will save His own, and He must judge the wicked. How awfully solemn this is! We read,

God looked unto the host of the Egyptians;

God

troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels,

until they said,

Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians {see Ex. 14:24, 25}.

We also read that

the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea {Ex. 14:27}.

Thus God wrought.

How very blessed is the contemplation of this double aspect of the work of Christ, in executing judgment upon all our enemies, and bringing us out by His mighty power in raising Christ from among the dead, and giving us life and liberty for ever in Him. Glorious triumph! All is of God; to Him be all the glory! It was indeed the salvation of the Lord. This is the first time, if I mistake not, that the word "salvation" occurs in Holy Scripture. ¹ It was a salvation from death and judgment, from Pharaoh and all the Egyptians. They *saw* the salvation of the Lord. And we read --

Thus the Lord *saved* Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel *saw* the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore {Ex. 14:30}.

They were now looking at these great enemies of their souls as dead upon the sea shore, set aside for ever by the judicial hand of the living God. And so, believing what God says, that

our old man is crucified with Christ {see Rom. 6:6},

we are enjoined to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. As long as we reckon the old man to be living, and strive against him and his actings, we give him importance; but when, in virtue of the substitution-work of Jesus, we see that we have died, we give the flesh no place, no importance, we do not recognize it, have no confidence in it, so that our eyes are taken off self altogether, and fixed upon a risen Christ; or, if we think of the old nature and its actings, we only see it dead, we reckon it to have died in the cross of Christ, as having been under divine judgment. As long as a believer is thinking of old self and its lusts, watching against, and providing against it, he is reckoning the old man to be living, and not dead, and fear, and distress, and weakness, and failure of various kinds come out in consequence. We read that

they that are Christ's *have* crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts {Gal. 5:24}.

And when? Was it not when they accepted God's judgment of it in the cross? We are therefore never told in the epistles to crucify the flesh, or to mortify the flesh, and for this reason, because God in His abundant grace has condemned it already -- it has been crucified with Christ. But we are told to mortify, or put to death, *the members of our body* -- the unclean actings of this old nature still in us, which we are to reckon to have died. We are also taught to mortify, or put to death, by the Spirit, not the flesh still in us, but its actings,

the *deeds* of the body {Rom. 8:13}.

All this is known only in the way of faith. Faith sees that God has done it, and believes God when He says He has done it. This is simple enough. To the apostle it was such a reality that he said,

I am crucified.

And if you ask, "When?" he replies,

with Christ.

And lest we should suppose it to be an alteration merely of the old nature, he adds,

Nevertheless I live; yet not I (not the old nature improved), but Christ liveth in me {Gal. 2:20}.

It is a new nature that lives; it is Christ his life living in him; for he is a new creation in Christ Jesus.

We do well then to remember the wide contrast in Israel's experience when they looked at the Egyptians as living and when they looked at them as dead. So we may be assured that if we look into the workings of flesh in us, and be occupied with it as if living, we must not expect to be otherwise than very wretched. The most miserable people on earth, perhaps, are Christians who have given themselves up to self-occupation, and the more so because they are God-fearing and conscientious; for, having learned the folly of the world's resources, they have nothing to lift them outside self, or to keep them from being occupied with it; and surely the happiest people on earth are those who

rejoice in Christ Jesus, worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh {see Phil. 3:3}.

Blessed are those, who, knowing they have risen life in a risen Christ, do reckon themselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God *in our* Lord Jesus Christ. Such worship and adore God as their God and Father, and praise Him for all His wondrous grace to them *in* Christ Jesus, and *through* His precious blood.

We therefore find when Israel had got the other side of the Red Sea how happy they were. It was a joyous moment; for they were entirely occupied with God, and what He had done. They were not occupied with self, nor with circumstances, but, I repeat, with God.

Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song *unto the Lord*, and spake, saying, I will sing *unto the Lord*, for *He* hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath *He* thrown into the sea. *The Lord* is my strength and song, and *He* is become my salvation: *He* is my God, and I will prepare *Him* an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath *He* cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea. . . . *Thy* right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in *power*: *thy* right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy {Ex. 15:1-6}.

What a burst of triumph this is! And what a change from the sore distress they were in such a short time before! But now they had *seen God's salvation*, and His great deliverance from the formidable host of the Egyptians, which threatened to swallow them up in their wrath. They were thus in liberty and on new ground. God had delivered them, God had given them the victory; and now they are taken up with Him, praising Him, and giving the glory due unto His name, ascribing all the *power* and glory of their *deliverance* to Him. How simple, and yet how very blessed, this is! What secrets are unfolded, what resources are opened up to us, in the contemplation of a crucified and *risen* Savior!

And *where*, dear Christian friends, do we take our place

1. {Nearly so! The first is in Gen. 49:18 (Jacob blessing his sons), the second is in Ex. 14:13 -- Moses foretelling salvation from the Egyptians at the Red sea. But the Red Sea is a great type of the salvation -- in the NT sense of the word -- of the believer, involving deliverance.}

before God? Is it on the Egypt side of the Red Sea, or the other? You cannot be happy in the former position. There was no singing in Egypt, though perfect safety; for they were sheltered by the blood of the lamb. But after that, when they arrived at Pihahiroth, perhaps they never had such fear and distress of soul. And yet, if you had asked them, Have you not been under the shelter of the blood? they would have replied, "Yes." Have you not been brought out of Egypt, and into the wilderness, by the direct power of God? "Yes." Is not the token of God's care and presence in the cloudy pillar by day, and the fiery pillar by night, continually with you? "Yes." Then why this deep, this bitter distress? The inquirer would immediately be directed to Pharaoh and all his hosts, who were so hotly pursuing them, shut in as they were by the Red Sea. Deliverance, they would say, we want; and nothing but a mightier power than any they had ever known could effect it. Oh the misery, the self-occupation, the lack of joy and gladness of those who take their place, though secure no doubt, on Egypt's side of the Red Sea!

And, oh, how rich the blessing, when assured by the infallible word of God, and we see the accomplishment in the finished and triumphant work of Jesus through death, of deliverance judicially from the "old man," from the world, from Satan, and know we have the present possession of eternal life in Christ risen! We praise and give thanks. We rejoice in Christ Jesus our life. We look back upon the Egypt world as a long way off, and as knowing that the waters of death and judgment, which have swallowed up all that was against us, roll between us and it. Thus have we peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; we are consciously objects of divine favor, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. If

when in Egypt we were met, through the grace of God, by the blood of the Lamb, it is at the Red Sea we have to do with Christ risen out of death, who is our life. And this makes all the difference. Blessed as it is to know the shelter of the blood, it is more blessed to know that we have resurrection life -- a life that lives the other side of death and judgment, an imperishable life, a life that naturally springs upward and onward, a life that has tastes, feelings, joys, and habits suited to God, and cannot rest the sole of her foot in the region of sin and Satan. Of such, too, it is written,

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then ye also shall appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).

We may joyfully sing --

"O Lord, Thou now art risen!
Thy travail now is o'er;
For sin Thou once hast suffered --
Thou liv'st to die no more!
Sin, death, and hell are vanquished
By Thee, who'rt now our Head;
And, lo! we share Thy triumphs,
Thou First-born from the dead.

"Into Thy death baptized,
We own *with Thee we died*;
With Thee, our life, we're risen,
And shall be glorified.
From sin, the world, and Satan,
We're ransomed by Thy blood;
And here would walk as strangers
Alive with Thee to God."

Possession; Or, The Other Side of Jordan

Joshua 5, 6

It was by the power of God that the people of Israel were brought into the land. The only way for them out of Egypt to Canaan was by the blood of the lamb, and by the mighty power of God bringing them through death and judgment, as set forth by the Red Sea, and Jordan. Their feet are now in the land where God's eyes and God's blessings always are. All is of God. They now *possess* what they had so long *desired*. They did not hope to be in the land, for they were there, and every inch they stood upon was for their own enjoyment. This is to us like the truth of Ephesians, where we are looked at as now made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. This is beyond being dead and risen, it is ascension truth -- in Christ, who is in the heavenlies. This is where the grace of God has set every believer. He may not know it, but He is accepted in the beloved, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and sitting in heavenly places in Christ. To know this as a divine reality gives true rest of soul. We are

then, as to spiritual life and standing, in *Christ* in heavenly places, or, according to the type, in the land now. To know it as a doctrine of Scripture is one thing; for our souls so to believe it as to enter into the holiest, inside the rent veil, and thus joyfully possess the good land, so to speak, is quite another thing. But we fall short of the blessings God would have us now embrace, if we do not enter upon, possess, and enjoy this blessed nearness to God *now*; for He who is ascended into heaven, and sitting on God's right hand, being our life, righteousness, and sanctification, we are alive for ever-more -- righteous as He is righteous, and as near to God as He is, because of the abundant grace and power of God to us-ward in Christ. When consciously near, entering where God has set us, we do not try to get near, and strive to be there, but rejoice that He has set us there. It is all His own doing, by His almighty power, and the exceeding riches of His grace. There is no effort in this; we see Jesus our Lord, our Head, our Life,

our Righteousness, and rejoice that we are in Him there; yea, filled to the full in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power. As we sometimes sing with reverence and joy –

“*So near*, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son
I am as near as He.

“*So dear*, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith He loves His Son,
Such is His love to me.”

Such is the height to which the grace and power of God in Christ, through His precious blood, have brought us, so that we wait for nothing less than the adoption, to wit, *the redemption of our body*, at the coming of our Lord, It is more than being sheltered by the blood of the Lamb, as Israel in Egypt sets forth; more than deliverance from the power of flesh and Satan, through death and judgment, and having risen life in the wilderness; it is being already in the possession and enjoyment of heavenly places by faith, in spiritual life and power. Every Christian is there; but how few seem to know it! We may say all Christians are in some sense in all three places. As a *fact*, we are still in this *Egypt* world, though not of it; as to *experience*, we are passing through a *wilderness*, a region which is dry and barren, and can yield nothing for our souls; and as to *faith*, we are in spiritual life, and standing *in Christ Jesus in heavenly places*. Only notice in Joshua, that after they entered the land it was not all peace and joy, but, on the contrary, conflict; for they had to fight hard in order to stand where God had brought them, and enjoy what God had given them. And so with us, for we who have entered upon our present possession in the heavenlies have to wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places in order to stand there, and enjoy the blessings given to us of God. And such only, be it observed, know this sharp and terrible conflict -- a conflict

not against flesh and blood,

but

against wicked spirits in high or heavenly places
(Eph. 6:12).

The first thing the children of Israel were enjoined to do, after they had passed through Jordan, carried twelve stones into the land, and set up twelve in the midst of Jordan, to the praise of God, was to make

sharp knives {Josh. 5:2},

and to circumcise again the second time. It is an injunction of all importance; for “the flesh” cannot be used in the service of God, cannot be recognized as having any place in the heavenlies. It must be wholly and decidedly renounced. Whether it be the flesh in its moral, intellectual, or religious phases, (alas, how deceitful it is, and desperately wicked!) it must be wholly denied. Its wisdom as well as its righteousness, its ways of refinement as well as of violence and corruption, its iniquity, both ecclesiastical and social, must be entirely set aside -- its claims, its pretensions, its pride, its lusts, in short, the “old man” must be completely “put off.” It needs a sharp knife; but it must be done. The attempt to be something in the flesh denies the work of Christ on the cross, and that we have

died with Christ. To set *it* up in Christians in any form is to undermine the real value of the cross, and sooner or later to lose the present enjoyment of that work in the soul. In short, to reckon ourselves to be living in the flesh, instead of having died with Christ and alive *in* Him, is to deny that we have either crossed the Red Sea or Jordan, and practically to confess that we are still in Egypt among the “hopers to be saved,” instead of *possessing* and *enjoying* our true place and new relationships and privileges as seated in Christ Jesus in heavenly places.

Secondly, they celebrated the ground of their deliverance and present blessings in keeping the passover. The passover was never forgotten; it was celebrated in Egypt, in the wilderness, in the land. So with us, it should be and will be had in everlasting remembrance, that the death and blood-shedding of the Lamb of God is the alone foundation of all our blessings. If now we have entered inside the veil, it is by the blood of Jesus. Our title to be there for ever is, that Jesus has entered into heaven itself by His own blood. This is never to be forgotten, for

“Our every joy on earth, in heaven,
We owe it to His blood.”

The passover then was celebrated by them after they entered the land. Now we are told that Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; and do we ever enter into the real purport and value of the Lord’s supper, unless we eat it as those who are already in Christ in the heavenlies, and therefore look back upon His death upon the cross? that is, we *see Him* now crowned with glory and honor, and *remember Him* as He was in death for us on the cross. We remember Jesus, and show His death till He come. And, seeing that we owe all our present and eternal blessings to the never-ending virtue of His precious blood, how can we ever forget such rich, such abundant mercy, in thus loving us, washing us from our sins in His own blood, and making us kings and priests unto God and His Father? (Josh. 5:10).

Thirdly, they feasted; they ate of

the old corn of the land (Josh. 5:11).

They were no longer dependent upon the ministry of a daily supply morning by morning, faithful and unfailing as it was; but they now had a continuous unceasing supply always at hand. So, now, souls who are consciously in heavenly places in Christ can feed unceasingly on Him; they enjoy not merely a living Christ who came down to die, but a risen and ascended Christ gone up on high. They feed on a triumphant, glorified Christ -- the true corn of wheat that belongs to heaven. They know the fulness of Christ is theirs. They can now enter into God’s thoughts, God’s estimate of Him, who raised Him from the dead, and said,

Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy
footstool {see Matt. 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42;
Acts 2:34}.

They see Him crowned with glory and honor. He is the object of their desire, as well as the accomplisher of their eternal salvation. They see in that Man in the glory, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the all-worthy One, to

whom angels, and principalities, and powers are made subject. They gaze by faith on Him, are attracted to Him, commanded by Him, satisfied with Him, rejoice in Him -- their strength, their sufficiency, their righteousness, their glory. They find Him enough to fill their hearts and minds; and so ardently do they long for unbroken fellowship with Him, that the fervent utterance of their hearts is --

“O fix our earnest gaze
 So wholly, Lord, on Thee,
 That with Thy beauty occupied,
 We elsewhere none may see!”

They feed, then, upon “the old corn of the land,” the fulness of an ever-living, ever-loving Savior in the glory. It is on Christ Himself they now feast, and draw their strength and comfort in blessed consciousness that they are in Him who is their everlasting life and righteousness.

Fourthly, this life of faith qualifies us for the *fight of faith*. Feasting first, then fighting. This is the divine order; and for this the captain of the Lord of hosts appears as their strength. They had to take possession of what God had given them, and all on which the sole of their foot rested, and only so much could they enjoy. Conflict, then, sharp conflict with the enemies in the land, was before them, and it would have been overwhelming did they not know that the Lord of hosts was with them. Joshua, when near Jericho,

lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man with a drawn sword in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.

This was a most affecting reply to Joshua; for he fell on his face and worshiped, and said,

What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And he did so {see Josh. 5:13-15}.

And what is this but the Lord appearing to His servant as the Commander and strength of His people? How forcibly it reminds us of the divine injunction by the apostle:

Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might {Eph. 6:10}.

And besides these points, do we not see what exercise of soul we need in order to fully place ourselves in the hands of the Lord, and realize that He is for us and with us? Thus we should encourage ourselves in Him, and lean not on fleshly energy, but on His almighty arm, and faithfulness and love. It cannot, I believe, be too strongly impressed upon our souls, that we need divine energy to take possession of, and to enjoy our blessings in heavenly places in Christ -- that Satan's chief aim is to keep us from being inside the veil, the true ground of worship and communion, and the true power for all service. Severed from Christ, we are perfect weakness; we can do nothing. Abiding in Him, we can do all things through His strength; so that to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” we must have to do with the Lord Himself, as those who

reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be

alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ {see Rom. 6:11}.

Then we look to the Lord for all, trust in Him about all, see Him in all, and lean on Him concerning all. True Christian life is, therefore, living a life of faith upon the Son of God, abiding in Him, having all our resources in Him. Then, like in Israel's history, the victory will be ours; and when fleshly confidence is relied on, instead of the strength of the Lord, we shall bitterly feel that the enemy will triumph. May we know, beloved, day by day, more the constant practical reality of being strong in the Lord; for it is written,

Blessed is the man whose *strength* is in Thee {Psa. 84:5}.

“Though numerous hosts of mighty foes,
 Though earth and hell our way oppose,
 He safely leads His saints along:
 His loving-kindness, oh how strong!”

Thus far we have considered the enjoyment and exercise of soul *Godward* in those who had crossed the dried-up Jordan and taken possession of the land. Of necessity their feelings and experiences are different from what they were in Egypt, or in the wilderness. But having traced a little their exercises and ways *Godward* in the fifth chapter, let us now look at their ways *manward* as set forth in the sixth chapter.

Firstly, notice the distinct place of *separation* they necessarily took before men, because of their having been separated unto God. The two will doubtless always go together, for the sense of nearness to God will throw us off from that which we know to be contrary to God. They were outside the Jericho-world, for it was doomed; it was exposed to judgment, and only waited for the time of execution. This the men of Jericho did not believe; but it did not alter the fact, any more than people saying the world is getting better does not alter the verdict passed upon it --

Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31}.

But, observe, this is not all; they were *outside with the ark* -- type of Christ. A Pharisee or a monk can separate himself from society; but to look at this world as a great system reared up by men and Satan, and see people too (unbelievers) exposed to the judgment of God, *having rejected Christ*, and to take a place with Christ, outside of it politically, religiously, socially, is the true path. It is because we are in Christ up there, and for ever united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that we are necessarily linked with Christ down here, and that must be in separation from the world, for they have rejected Him, and still reject. The answer was, and still is,

We will not have this man to reign over us {Luke 19:14}.

No marvel, therefore, that the Holy Ghost enjoins us, when speaking of unbelievers, to

come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:17, 18).

Secondly, they took the place of *obedience*. And how can it be otherwise with us, if we realize the fact that we are united to Him in the heavenlies? When Paul, going up to Damascus, unexpectedly caught a sight of Jesus in the glory, and heard from His own precious lips,

Why persecutest thou ME,
was not the immediate response of His deeply-moved heart,

Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? {Acts 9:4-6}

for he surely felt at once, that nothing less than full surrender to the Lord's claims would be consistent with the exceeding grace that He had manifested. If we then are really conscious of our nothingness in the flesh, as having died with Christ, and enter into and possess the blessing and enjoyment of being one with Him who is in the glory, how can we have lower thoughts than that

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands our soul, our life, our all?"

All this is beautifully set forth in the charming picture we are contemplating. It is a divinely-illustrated scene. The people now standing on the promised land, now enjoying the long-promised, long-looked-for region flowing with milk and honey, having feasted on the old corn, and conscious of the captain of the Lord's host being with them, they surrender themselves entirely to the appointed guidance, and take the place of obedience so plainly marked out for them, whether to walk or rest, to be quiet or to shout, to sound the horn or not, according to the word of the Lord. And this proved to be the path of blessing. Their *testimony* was simply owning the Lord, hearkening to His word, doing His will, though it were to manifest to the people of Jericho a spectacle of weakness and folly. But if the priests made a long blast with "rams' horns," and for six days all the men of war compassed the city once each day with them and the ark, and on the seventh day seven times, it was according to the word of the Lord; and what could be a truer testimony? If they neither shouted, nor made any noise with their voice, neither let any word proceed out of their mouth, until Joshua bade them shout, according to the word of the Lord, it was in *obedience* to the will of the Lord. We know what success followed. And surely the path of obedience must always be with us the path of blessing. We are sanctified unto obedience. We realize the presence of the Lord with us only in the path of obedience. To speak of union with Christ in the heavens, and our present blessings and standing in Him, while our hearts are unexercised as to obedience to the Lord in our present circumstances, is only to show that we traffic in high-flown doctrines, and know little of their true meaning in our souls. Or, it may betray the solemn fact that the natural mind has been amusing itself with an intellectual gratification on the doctrines of Scripture, without the heart in any way grasping their precious heaven-born, unfathomable, eternal realities. The great proof of love to our Lord Jesus Christ now is, that we keep His commandments, prize His sayings, and treasure up His words; and to such, and to such alone, He has promised to manifest Himself, and make them know that He and the Father have taken up their abode with them. Precious, profoundly precious realities for our enjoyment! and suited surely to such as have been rescued from this present evil age, who have died with Christ, and now live in Him, and who are characterized as not walking after the flesh, but after the Spirit. It is this entire consecration to the will of the Lord, which is so needed in these times of laxity and carelessness -- whole-hearted dedication to Him, full

surrender to His never-failing guidance, and the paramount authority of His holy word at all cost. Such hearts can truly sing

"While here, to do *His will be mine*,
And His to fix my time of rest."

Thirdly, let us look at their *service*. What was it? Was it to do what they could to improve Jericho? Was it to endeavor to elevate the masses of the inhabitants of this strongly-fortified and well-built city? Was it to tell them that the world was getting better? Certainly not; for none of these things would be true. But it was to *save sinners out of* this already doomed city. God's testimony had gone out against it. The city, the king, and all the men of valor were given to Joshua for destruction; but there were some to be saved out of it -- some who would not come into judgment, and the faithful servants of God were intent on saving them. A harlot among them there was; but she was a woman of faith, had shown it by favoring the people of God, and openly confessed her faith by putting the scarlet line in the window. Little could the wise and mighty men of this famous city suspect for a moment what the scarlet line meant, even if they had seen it. Not so, however, with God's people. For when the wall had fallen down flat, the city was taken, and the process of utter destruction was about to begin, at Joshua's command

the young men that were spies *went in, and brought out* Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and *they brought out* all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel {Josh. 6:23}.

And they burnt the city with fire. We are told that

Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had, . . . because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho {Josh. 6:25},

at whose command she had bound the "scarlet line" in the window. (See Josh. 2:18; 6:22-25.)

And does not this exquisite picture again read a further lesson of precious instruction to us? For if the world through which we are passing is under condemnation, if Jesus meant what He said when He uttered the solemn verdict,

Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31},

and if there be not one line of Scripture enjoining us to improve it, what is our position toward it, but as separated ones by the grace of God to minister to souls, and seek to bring them out? to do good to people in it, and expect no good thing from it? Hence the Holy Spirit pointedly marks out the faithful servants of the Lord Jesus as those who

went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles for His name's sake {see 3 John 7}.

And surely, if our place now is oneness with Christ in the heavenlies, what can our position here be but separation unto the Lord in fellowship with every member of His body (the only membership in the New Testament), as those who warn men of their danger, and seek to save believing Rahabs? Thus God's way has been, and still is, in judgment to remember mercy. And how blessed this service is to

“Call them in” -- the Jew, the Gentile;
 Bid the stranger to the feast;
 Call them in -- the rich, the noble,
 From the highest to the least.
 Forth the Father runs to meet them,
 He hath all their sorrows seen;
 Robe, and ring, and royal sandals,
 Wait the lost ones -- “call them in,”

But here is also a solemn word of warning against lust and covetousness; for we are beset with snares on every hand. One of those who had professed faithfulness to God saw a Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, and coveted them. Accordingly, he took them, and hid them in his house; but God saw him, and His judgment fell heavily in consequence. And the common baits of Satan to professing Christians now we all know to be love of dress --

the Babylonish garment,

and the possession of wealth --

the wedge of gold {Josh. 7:21}.

And it is very remarkable that corrupted Christianity, the Babylon of the Apocalypse, is likened to a woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls. Joshua warned the people to keep themselves from the accursed thing, lest they made themselves accursed; but Achan heeded it not, and by his sin brought misery and defeat upon all the people, as well as swift destruction upon himself. May the Lord graciously keep us true to Himself in heart and purpose, and from *loving* the world, or the things of the world. But, for this, we need to have our souls happily occupied with Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

And now, beloved fellow-Christians, let us see how far we have entered into this place and character of blessing and testimony into which God has so mercifully brought us. Do we habitually take our place *before* God as those who are already brought nigh to Him in Christ Jesus in heavenly places? Are we struggling to get near through the workings of a spirit of bondage and unbelief? or do we bless and praise God that our

old man was crucified with Christ {see Rom. 6:6},

and that we are a new creation, and have life, standing, righteousness, and nearness to God in Christ ascended? We have it, I say; for God has given it to us; He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Blessed rest for our souls! solid and abiding peace too! Well, being then in all the acceptance of Christ Himself, in whom we are made accepted, do we know what it is practically to put a sharp knife to “the flesh,” and to rejoice in Christ Jesus, in the precious remembrance of His body given and His blood shed for us? Do we know what it is in God’s presence, in the holiest of all, to feast on an ever-living, ever-loving Christ -- “the old corn of the land”? and, having feasted, do we realize strength to fight against Satan and his hosts for the *possession* of those heavenly blessings which God has given us in Christ now to enjoy? And, as to our position here *before men*, do we maintain the place of *separation with Christ* as not of the world, because it is doomed to judgment? And do we seek to tread the path of *obedience*, and bear the *testimony* of the Lord, whatever reproach and censure it may bring upon

us? Do we labor to bring souls out of it, by the power of the precious blood of Jesus, the true “scarlet line”? And do we steadfastly decline the fashionable and costly attire, and the will-be-rich spirit of this present age? These are solemn, all-important questions for our consciences, beloved fellow-Christians, on which our present joy or sorrow, as well as the glory or dishonor of the Lord, hang. May we unhesitatingly grasp and delight in our present blessings, in the spirit of communion and worship, in Christ inside the veil, and know them as deep and unfading realities, so that we may be found in the true place of separation and faithfulness before men as to bring praise and glory to God.

Have You the Spirit?

If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His (Rom. 8:9).

Have you the Spirit? is then a question of vital importance; and from this and other Scriptures we gather, not only that every child of God has the Spirit of Christ, but that he should know that he has this blessed One dwelling in Him, We **have** repeatedly heard it said, "I know that I have the Spirit of God dwelling in me, because Scripture says so"; but while this is perfectly true, ought it to be enough to satisfy us? Is it possible that God the Holy Ghost can dwell in us without our having some sense of His almighty, ever-living activities in our souls? And are there not many operations of the same Spirit? Are we not also told that

the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God {1 Cor. 2:11}?

How important, then, it is to have clear and intelligent thoughts, as revealed in Scripture, as to the Holy Ghost Himself, and His indwelling and operations in us!

In tracing this most blessed subject a little, we may notice first what Scripture says we have not received. We are told we have *not* received

the spirit of the world (1 Cor. 2:12),

which we know only occupies itself with things of earth, and time, and sense, matters bounded by death on every hand. *Nor* have we received

the spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:7),

that spirit of dread and torment ever brooding over painful uncertainties and gloomy forebodings. *Nor* have we received

the spirit of bondage again to fear (Rom. 8:15),

connected with legal observances and ritual ceremonials, which never can deliver from the fear of death. But we are distinctly told that we *have*

received the Spirit of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God {see 1 Cor. 2:12};

that we *have* received

the spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind {see 2 Tim. 1:7};

and that

we *have* received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father {see Rom. 8:15}.

All therefore of the workings within, of the love of the world and of bondage, legal fears and dreadful apprehensions, are not of the Spirit of God. Nor can that Holy Spirit produce thoughts in us for the dishonour of the Lord Jesus; for

no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed {1 Cor. 12:3}.

We have in this way the ground cleared as to what the Spirit of God doth *not* produce in us; and also of the love, liberty, and conscious relationships He gives us to enjoy.

And further, we are told that

the love of God *is* shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us {Rom. 5:5};

thus producing in us a happy sense of our being objects of divine love. And as to intelligence, we now know what prophets declared they did not know. If a *prophet* said,

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him {1 Cor. 2:9},

we *reply*,

But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:9, 10).

Thus we see at once the actions of the Spirit, both in the heart and in the mind, according as it is written,

I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 10:16, 17}.

But the important question may be asked by some, What do you mean by having the Spirit of Christ? This expression is only used once more in Scripture as far as I remember, and then in reference to the Old Testament prophets, who testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow, by the Spirit of Christ which was in them (1 Pet. 1:11). Elsewhere the prophets are said to have spoken by the Holy Ghost. By the Spirit of Christ, then, we are now to understand the Holy Ghost, that other Comforter which Jesus promised to send after His departure out of this world, and which, we are also told, could not be given till Jesus was glorified. And so important was the coming down of the Holy Ghost, that the disciples were told to tarry in Jerusalem for Him. And after Jesus had been raised from the dead, and had been seen of His disciples forty days, He charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, for they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence. Now observe, they were not thus put to wait for the new birth, or to be made God's children, for that they were already; nay, more, they had received risen life too, for so I understand, when Jesus breathed on them, saying,

Receive ye the Holy Ghost {John 20:22};

that life in the Spirit -- risen life -- was then communicated; but they were waiting for the *Holy Ghost Himself*; to indwell them, and unite them to their glorified Head in heaven in the membership of His body.

It was, then, after Jesus had gone into heaven with His own blood, having set us there before God as cleansed and justified by His blood, that the Holy Ghost came down and took up His abode for ever in such as were cleansed. *First*, made sons by being born of God, and cleansed from all sin, and *then*,

because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son in your hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father {see Gal. 4:6}.

These two operations -- the new birth by the Spirit, and the subsequent indwelling of the Spirit -- are clearly distinct, and the latter succeeds the former, i.e. the Holy Ghost indwells those who are born of God.

Observe also, it is not an emanation of the Spirit merely that is given. Scripture is quite plain as to this. It is "the Comforter" which is "the Holy Ghost." Nor do we read of our having the Spirit merely in the way of *influence*, though He does influence our hearts, and minds, and consciences. The idea of an influence sets aside the reality of His indwelling, and makes us think of one outside us, acting upon us, like the sun in the heavens sheds his genial rays upon us, rather than the fact of His being *in* us. Such thoughts also obscure the glory of His divine person, and rob souls of the happy enjoyment of His presence and operations. When one looks only at Scripture, it is unaccountable how Christians should be praying *for* the Spirit, and for His influences, as if He had not come.

Before the day of Pentecost it was well enough to pray for the Spirit, and to look for His coming; hence in the gospels, our blessed Lord said,

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him (Luke 11:13).

But since He has come, there is no such idea in Scripture as that of Christians praying for the Spirit; but, on the contrary, in the epistles, there is the constant recognition of the fact that He is here.

To pray *to* the Spirit, as some insist on, is far more excusable, because the Holy Ghost is God; but even doing this betrays ignorance of the order of Scripture teaching; for the Spirit being the power of prayer, and the One who teaches us how to pray and what to pray for, who makes intercession for the saints according to God, we are spoken of as praying *in* the Spirit instead of *to* the Spirit.

But to pray for a *fresh baptism* of the Spirit is wholly unscriptural, and entirely without excuse. In Acts 1 the saints were instructed to wait to be baptized with the Holy Ghost. In Acts 2 the Holy Ghost came down and filled them. In 1 Cor. 12:12 we are told, that

by one Spirit we are all *baptized into one body*.

Baptism of the Spirit is clearly then the Holy Ghost indwelling God's children, and connecting them in the unity of one body with Christ their glorified Head in heaven. If, then, believers are once for all united to Christ in glory by the Holy Ghost, how can this be re-done? What meaning therefore can be attached to the expression so common among many Christians, of praying for a *fresh baptism of the Spirit*? It is very sad.

Again, we sometimes hear, from those too of whom we should least expect it, of our having received only *a measure of the Spirit*. But where does Scripture say this? Where do you find it? It is said that

the Father giveth *not* the Spirit by measure:

unto him is in italics, and therefore not in the original. (See John 3:34.) And if one only thinks of it for a moment, it becomes apparent, that if it be only a measure of the Spirit we have received, then the Holy Ghost Himself has not come. It is also thought that the idea of our having the Spirit only in

measure is strengthened by the expression in Eph. 5,

Be filled with the Spirit,

because they suppose to be filled with the Spirit is to have a greater measure. Such, however, is not the case. The apostle there puts it in the form of an exhortation or command, saying,

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit {Eph. 5:18}.

That is, do not feed on that which excites the flesh, do not strengthen it, for that grieves and hinders the Spirit's working in us; as Peter says,

Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul {1 Pet. 2:11}.

Be not then drunk with wine, wherein is excess; or do not strengthen, but abstain from fleshly lusts, but be filled with the Spirit {see Eph. 5:18}.

Or, so let that which is carnal be reckoned dead by you, that the Spirit may be ungrieved, unhindered, so that He may fill every faculty of your heart and mind. Thus to be filled with the Spirit is not having more of the Spirit, but the Spirit of God who indwells you, so ungrieved as to *fill* all your mind and heart with Christ.

But all these mistakes about the Holy Ghost arise from not knowing Him.

Ye know Him,

said our blessed Lord,

for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you {John 14:17}.

The eternal Godhead of the Holy Ghost is plainly and abundantly set forth in Scripture, and the attributes and sovereign actings of God are ascribed to Him. He is called the eternal Spirit. The psalmist speaks of His omnipresence, saying,

Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? {Psa. 139:7}.

The apostle Paul alludes to His omniscience --

He searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God {see 1 Cor. 2:10}.

In Acts 5 He is called God. In the third verse Peter charges Ananias with lying to the Holy Ghost; and in the next verse says to him,

Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God {Acts 5:4}.

The sovereign actings of the Holy Ghost are seen in Acts 13:2, in saying,

Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them;

and in Acts 16:6 He forbids them to preach the word in Asia. And when they assayed to go into Bithynia, we are told that the Spirit suffered them not {Acts 16:7}.

Thus we see that the Holy Ghost dwelling in the church is called God; and we also see His sovereign actings with the servants of the Lord in regard to their work. We have noticed also some of His divine attributes. Who else but God could thus act?

His personality also calls for a few words; for though He be God the Holy Ghost, He is not God the Father, nor God the Son; and yet these three are One. Though the Father and the Son are One in divine essence, so that Jesus could say,

I and my Father are One {John 10:30},
yet in person they are distinct. Hence we read that the Father
sent the Son, that

when the fulness of time was come God sent forth His Son
{Gal. 4:4}.

And so of the Holy Ghost Jesus said,

Whom the *Father will send* in my name (John 14:26);
and again,

Whom *I will send* unto you from the Father (John 15:26);
and further,

If I go not away, the *Comforter will not come* unto you
(John 16:7).

Also His personal actings were referred to by our Lord --

*He shall teach you all things. He shall bring all things to
your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you. He
shall testify of me. He shall guide you into all truth. He
shall glorify me: and shall receive of mine, and shew unto
you {John 14:26, 15:26, 16:13, 14}.*

What language could more plainly convey to our minds the
reality of *personal actings*? And who, I would ask, but One who
was God, could teach all things, and guide into all truth? It is
“He,” “He,” “He,” all through. Thus the Godhead and
personality of the Holy Ghost are plainly taught in the word of
God, which liveth and abideth for ever. Let these precious truths
be solemnly pondered by us.

His *operations* occupy a large place in Scripture. From
Genesis downward His actings are constantly seen. At creation He

moved upon the face of the waters {Gen 1:2}.

In the wilderness He endowed Bezaleel with wisdom to make
various parts of the tabernacle and furniture, so as to typify the
person and work of the Lord Jesus. The anointing oil in figure
set Him forth. He came upon prophets to speak and write the
words of God, to set forth the sufferings of Christ and the
glories which follow; and He loosed the tongues of men and
women to praise and magnify Jehovah at the birth of the Son of
God, who had been conceived by the Holy Ghost. He came upon
Jesus, the perfect One, in bodily shape as a dove, when the
Father’s testimony of Him was,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased
{Matt. 3:17}.

It was by the eternal Spirit that Jesus offered Himself without
spot to God, and after death and burial was quickened by the
Spirit. The same Holy Ghost came down to form and indwell the
assembly of God at Pentecost, and has been here ever since as
the other Comforter to abide with us for ever; and He is the
power of all blessing.

With regard to His present operations, Scripture speaks of
them as both individual, and collective; for He dwells in the
Church as well as in believers individually. (See Eph. 2:22;
1 Cor. 3:16; and also 1 Cor. 6:19.) On these subjects the
instruction is large and varied, a knowledge of which is of the
highest importance for our soul’s comfort and blessing. But as
Scripture we are considering looks at the individual as possessing
the Spirit, our remarks must for the present be confined to this
point.

1. We are distinctly taught in Scripture, that where the Spirit of
the Lord is there is *liberty*. As we have before seen, He does
not bring us into bondage or servile fear, but sets our souls in
the enjoyment of the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free,
and points us to Him now seated in the heavenlies, as there
because He did by His one offering perfect for ever them that
are sanctified. Hence we sing--

“Our doubts and fears for ever gone,
For Christ is on the Father’s throne.”

2. It is by the Holy Ghost which is given to us that *the love of
God is shed abroad in our hearts*. Thus we are not merely
informed of the truth intellectually, but are given a feeling
sense, an enjoyment of the fact that we are objects of divine
love. Our hearts are melted with God’s love, and we can say
with the apostle,

We love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

3. The Holy Ghost being given to us as
the Spirit of adoption {Rom. 8:15}

after we were born of God, filial feelings are produced in us, so
that we love God as our Father, and our fellow-believers as
brethren. The Spirit, no doubt by the truth, bears witness with
our spirits that we are children of God, and gives us also access
through Jesus unto the Father. Thus we can in some measure
even now enter into these precious words of Jesus,

I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God,
and your God {John 20:17}.

This marvelous relationship we know by the Spirit dwelling in
us, which causes our hearts to flow out in worship to the Father,
and in love and sympathy unto His children.

4. It is also by the Spirit that we can truly know and own *Jesus
as Lord*; for we are told that

no man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost
(1 Cor. 12:3).

It is remarkable in Christendom, while many talk so glibly of
“our Savior,” how comparatively rare it is to find a person
ready to confess that Jesus is his Lord, the One now owned by
him in the place of exaltation and honor; thus demanding both
his adoring gratitude and subjection of heart and will.

5. The Holy Ghost is our *Leader*.

As many as are *led* by the Spirit of God, they are the sons
of God {Rom. 8:14}.

In gentleness He leads (not drives or coerces) us; but like a
nurse leads her little ones across a path of defilement and
danger, so He graciously gives us to hear His still small voice
within us saying,

This is the way; walk ye in it {Isa. 30:21}.

It is an important fact to notice, that those who are led of the
Spirit are not under the law. Happy are they who, in meekness
and confidence, wholly and unreservedly commit themselves to
His sure guidance.

6. The Holy Ghost *strengthens* the new nature; hence the apostle
prays that we may be

strengthened with might by His Spirit in the *inner man*
{Eph. 3:16}.

But He dwells in our bodies and in our hearts.

Know ye not that your *body* is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you? (1 Cor. 6:19).

God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your *heart's*, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6).

7. *The fruit of the Spirit* (Gal. 5:22)

stands in wide contrast with

the works of the flesh {Gal. 5:19}.

It is

love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Gal. 5:23).

8. The Holy Ghost is our *Teacher*; He guides into all truth. God has now revealed precious mysteries by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things; yea, the deep things of God. Jesus said,

He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you {John 14:26}.

What a precious Teacher! How astonishing that we do not more implicitly, and more habitually, yield ourselves to be taught by Him! Perhaps nothing shows more what self-confidence lurks in us than our shortcoming as to this.

9. The Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us is the other *Comforter*, the Paraclete -- the One who manages everything in us, even as Jesus is the Advocate, or Paraclete, above, and manages everything for us up there. We are filled with joy in the Holy Ghost, we abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost, and are taught to cry,

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

It is by His gracious ministry that the word which testifies of Christ is often brought to remembrance so suitably to our heart's need, that we are comforted when cast down, or gently reprov'd when inclining to that which is evil in His sight. It is by His effectual working that the personal glories, accomplished redemption, triumphant work, fitness and fulness of Christ, are brought home to our souls for comfort and blessing. He is the power of our fellowship with the Father and His Son, and the helper of our infirmities in prayer. He is ever attracting us to Christ, drawing us up to where He is, and setting our minds on things above. He glorifies Christ, and takes of the things of Christ and shows unto us, and teaches us as to ourselves that in us, that is in our flesh, dwells no good. He is always associating our souls with Christ; as another has said --

"He never leads a man to say,
Thank God I'm made so good,
But turns his eye another way,
To Jesus and His blood."

10. It is the Holy Ghost dwelling in us who is *the power of all ministry*. When, through the exercise of faith in the Lord Jesus, we drink in the blessed satisfaction, enjoyment, and rest that He gives to needy, thirsty souls, and it sinks down in deep reality in us, then it gushes forth from us in blessing to others; as Jesus said,

If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water*. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was

not yet glorified) {John 7:37-39}.

Thus in the early part of John's gospel we have the three great actions of the Spirit set forth. In the third chapter, the new birth, or being born of the Spirit; in the fourth chapter, what it is to be indwelt by the Spirit, who is always drawing the heart upward:

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:13, 14).

Then, as we have just seen, in the seventh chapter, the action of the Holy Ghost flowing out in blessing to those around from deeply-felt power of Christ's preciousness. But it is important to observe that each of these operations is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ.

11. The Holy Ghost is also the One by whom we are *sealed* unto the day of redemption. He is the *earnest*, until we come into the actual possession of the inheritance, and the *anointing* or spiritual power whereby we are fitted to live according to the Lord's mind:

After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:13, 14).

Ye *have an unction* from the Holy One, and ye know all things (1 John 2:20).

Besides these, there are many more operations of the Holy Ghost the Comforter, who has come down to dwell in us; and it is well to see that He is in us, and is to abide with us for ever. Many a timid soul says, "I am afraid I shall so grieve Him that He will depart from me"; but Scripture says quite the reverse.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

But they say, Then why did David so fear this that he cried out,

Take not thy Holy Spirit from me {Psa. 51:11}?

But it is certain that David never had the Spirit dwelling *in him as we have*; and if he only knew what it was to have the Spirit coming upon him, and moving him now and then to prophesy, &c., no wonder that he so ardently cried out, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." It is, however, sufficient to show that the teaching of the epistles is not, Do not grieve Him, lest He depart; but, Do not grieve Him, because He will not depart, but will abide with you for ever.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

12. But there is a point that ought not to be overlooked. It is this. Our Lord assured His disciples that when the Holy Ghost came they would know three things; the personal glory of Jesus as in the Father, and also that we are in Christ, and that He is in us. And about these precious realities there would be no doubt, when the Holy Ghost came.

In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you (John 14:20).

The importance of this divine statement cannot be overrated, for it shows the character of spiritual intelligence that every believer should now possess. And no doubt these precious facts would be both known and enjoyed, if believers were more simply deriving

their information from God's word, instead of from the teachings and traditions of men. Alas! how many souls are doubting their salvation, instead of enjoying by faith the blessed realities of their being in Christ, accepted in Him, complete in Him, made the righteousness of God in Him! One thing, however, is certain, that the Holy Ghost teaches all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ that *we have* redemption in Christ, and through His blood; that *we are* children of God, and not under the law; that *we are* in Christ, and that He is in us.

Enough has been said to show that those who have known a power outside flesh and blood bringing them as sinners to

Jesus as Savior, who know Jesus in the heavens to be Lord, who have God's love in their hearts, who are conscious of having life, a new life in Christ, enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, and who realize that One is teaching, guiding, leading them into God's truth, and obedience to it, for His glory, *have the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Christ*. Oh the depth of the riches of the grace of God to us!

"What moved Thee to impart
Thy Spirit from above,
Therewith to fill our heart
With heavenly peace and love?
'Twas love, unbounded love to us,
Moved Thee to give Thy Spirit thus."

Are We Waiting?

The Coming of the Lord Practically Considered

In the Old Testament Scriptures, no such idea as the Lord's coming from heaven for His saints to be caught up to meet Him in the air is recorded. A great deal is there found about Messiah's coming to the earth and reigning over it, sitting in David's throne, and reigning in mount Zion and in Jerusalem before His ancients gloriously, because in the prophets we have blessings promised to God's earthly people. The true expectation of the Jews therefore is, that Messiah is coming to establish them in blessing on the earth; and in this they are right. But since Christ has been raised from among the dead, and has sent down the Holy Ghost to form the Church, which is His body, another hope, suited to a heavenly people, has been set forth in clearness and detail. True it is that the blessed Lord did say, on leaving His disciples to go unto the Father,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3};

but we should have had considerable difficulty in entering into the true character of this expectation had not other revelations been subsequently brought out. The Thessalonian saints were taught simply

to wait for God's Son from heaven {see 1 Thess. 1:10},

in blessed assurance that they had by Him been delivered from the wrath to come. But so little did they understand the true character of the hope, that when they saw their brethren die they began to sorrow about them with despondency, because they had not remained alive till the Lord came. We find, therefore, that the apostle communicates a revelation which he had received from the Lord on the subject:

This we say unto you *by the word of the Lord* {1 Thess. 4:15}.

About this it is not the Lord's mind that we should be in ignorance. He says,

I would not have you ignorant, brethren, *concerning them which are asleep*, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. . . . For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise

first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord {1 Thess. 4:13-17}.

This account of the dead saints rising, and the living joining them, and all being translated together to meet the Lord in the air, though meeting the present distress of the Thessalonian saints as to how it would be with their departed brethren, (those who had died in Christ,) when the Son came from heaven, yet even here we have no instruction as to the change, the character of body we shall have at that time. For this another revelation was needed, and it was afterward given. In 1 Cor. 15:51, the apostle further communicates what had never been known before. Up to that moment the state we should be in, and our bodily fitness for the Lord's presence, had been shrouded in mystery; but here it is clearly unfolded. The apostle says,

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality {1 Cor. 15:51, 53}.

Now here observe, we have clearly set forth that the bodies will be changed in a moment both of the living saints and of the dead saints; and while it is plainly asserted that all saints will not die or sleep, but that some will be alive upon the earth when the Lord Jesus comes, yet then, in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, our mortal and corruptible bodies will put on immortality and incorruptibility. How blessed this is, and how simply the Lord in His Word has marked out every step in this heavenward way, so that no room may be left for question or doubt, but that every soul may intelligently and happily wait for God's Son from heaven! The first stage, so to speak, then, is this wondrous change -- changed in a moment -- our bodies of humiliation changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body, thus giving us capacities for untiring service and unwearying delight, while gazing on Him in the bright eternal glory of God and the Lamb. Being changed, then, in a moment, we are at once translated --

caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air {1 Thess. 4:17}.

This we may call the second stage. After this He will present us to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but being holy and without blame. Yes,

“There we shall see His face,
And never, never sin;
There, from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”

It would be interesting to trace what is before us still further as to our manifestation at the bema of Christ, our rewards, the bride making herself ready, the marriage of the Lamb, our reigning with the Lord Jesus, the judgment of the wicked dead, and consider also what is revealed as to the eternal state; but our present object is rather to look at the practical way in which Scripture sets this blessed, soul-stirring, comforting, purifying hope before us.

Now hope is something more than knowledge of doctrine. Hope is a living, active energy of the soul. Many *know*, as a Scripture truth, what they call the Lord’s second coming; but for the heart to be going out to Him in bridal, fervent expectation is another thing! Hence it does not say in Scripture, He that hath the knowledge of the doctrine, but

He that hath this *hope* in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure (1 John 3:3).

This *hope*, then, is eminently sanctifying and practical, enabling us to detach ourselves from that which is impure; for when hope is true and lively in the soul, the eye of the heart is fixed on its desired object. The affections thus become occupied with our blessed and adorable Lord Jesus, and therefore separated from what is unsuitable to Him.

Again, as we have before noticed, the early saints *waited* for God’s Son from heaven. They expected this blessed person to come from heaven. Their posture of soul was that of looking for Him, that blessed One whom God had raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered them from the wrath to come. They were thus in the activity of their souls gazing up into heaven, and *waiting* for God’s Son. And what was their Christian life? Were they careless in walk, shut up toward others, and indolent in the work of the gospel? Most certainly not. Quite the contrary; for they were proverbial for their works of faith and labors of love, and from them sounded out the word of God to all around. The very fact that they were waiting for God’s Son from heaven kept them in such communion with Him, that they were strengthened by divine power to be thus earnest, loving, devoted, and faithful in the gospel. Perhaps, if we wanted a practical exposition of those words of the apostle John, “He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure,” we should scarcely find it told out in more living energy than in the life, and ways, and service of the Thessalonian saints, so sweetly recorded for our comfort and encouragement by the Holy Ghost.

I again notice that they *waited* for God’s Son from heaven; and elsewhere we read of others who *looked* for the Savior. This is the truth of God in active power on the heart. It is reality -- a living person at the right hand of God; a man in the glory; Son of God and Son of man -- *looked* for and *waited* for. Can anything be more blessedly simple, or more profoundly real? It is intensely individual, powerfully practical -- the soul patiently looking out for the object of its expectancy. Observe, it is not

signs they looked for, but Christ; not some wondrous events to be fulfilled on earth; not some peculiar feeling to come over them, but the Lord Himself. Not death or judgment, but the Savior Himself to come and change their bodies, and translate them to glory. Is it possible that such a glorious, blessed, comforting hope could possess the soul without decided practical action? Impossible; though it can be readily seen how easy it is for the doctrine to occupy the intellect without the affections being called forth in suited response to His

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:7}!

If we turn to some parts of the Old Testament, we shall find touching incidents, which may be used to illustrate the practical effects the truth of the Lord’s coming for us will necessarily have when He is really thus the hope of our hearts.

If we look first at the ordinance of the year of jubilee, as recorded in Lev. 25, we shall find an instructive and searching lesson on the subject. I do not say that the sounding of the jubilee trumpet was typical of the Lord’s coming for us; for I believe it to be typical of the time when the Lord will appear to the Jews as their Messiah, and bring His ancient people into their promised liberty, and give every tribe in the land of Israel its own proper possession, according to Ezekiel’s prophecy. But as an illustration it is striking, not only as setting forth the marvelous and eternal blessings into which the coming of the Lord Himself will introduce us, but also as showing that the value we attach to everything here is in proportion to our sense of the distance or nearness of the Lord’s coming.

And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy unto you: ye shall eat the increase thereof out of the field. In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession. And if thou sell ought unto thy neighbour, or buyest ought of thy neighbour’s hand, ye shall not oppress one another: according to the number of years after the jubilee thou shalt buy of thy neighbour, and according unto the number of years of the fruits he shall sell unto thee: according to the multitude of years thou shalt increase the price thereof, and according to the fewness of years thou shalt diminish the price of it: for according to the number of the years of the fruits doth he sell unto thee {Lev. 25:8-16}.

Observe here, that the jubilee trumpet sounded on the very day of atonement, which reminds us that in Scripture the Lord’s coming for us is in virtue of His atonement, and not because of any merit whatever in us. It is the consummation of His own way of grace to us, and not in the least degree dependent on our faithfulness. If you remember, our Lord said,

This is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting

life: and I will raise him up at the last day
{John 6:40}.

Here you see that our Lord is pledged to raise up all who look to Him for everlasting life; and nothing can be more false than the doctrine promulgated, alas! so extensively in our day, that only those of the Lord's servants who have been faithful will be caught up at the coming of our Lord. Scripture plainly says,

They that *are Christ's* at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23};

and again,

The dead *in Christ* {1 Thess. 4:16},

and

We which are alive and remain {1 Thess. 4:17}.

It is happy, then, to be clear on this point, and to think of the coming of the Lord for us, and our being caught up to meet Him in the air, as the completion of His blessed work of redemption; His application of its power to our bodies, even as already it has been to our souls, as it is said,

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace
{Eph. 1:7}.

Elsewhere we are told that while now groaning in these bodies, and having the Spirit of adoption,

we are waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies {see Rom. 8:23}.

But in this jubilee ordinance three characters of blessing were joyfully anticipated -- liberty, possession, and family gathering; concerning which I only notice, firstly, that for us to be with the Lord will be to enjoy everlasting *liberty* in His most blessed presence, without any let or clog as we now have with these groaning bodies, and their various infirmities. Secondly, that we shall *possess* the glorious object which our hearts have so long and so adoringly longed for; for we shall see His face, and thus be entirely and for ever satisfied. Thirdly, then also the whole Church of God will enjoy its perfect unity in unbroken fellowship, and in everlasting, undisturbed love and rest. What a glorious prospect our God here spreads out before us, beloved, for confidence and hope!

"O may the heavenly vision fire
Our hearts with ardent love,
Till wings of faith, and strong desire,
Bear every thought above!"

Another point to notice is, that the year of jubilee was not the time for sowing and reaping. *Now* we know that this time is so, and is in every sense of the utmost importance for us to well consider. For, however rich, and suited, and abundant the grace of God is to usward in Christ, yet are we not the less subjects of the government of God, and that too in connection with all our ways,

for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap
{Gal. 6:7};

but then it will not be sowing and reaping, though in a more perfect way praising and serving. But the important lesson for us to learn in this ordinance of the jubilee year, is that the value of their land was in direct proportion to the fewness of years, or number of years before the trumpet would sound; and this because the land would then return to each one according to his family. This surely shows us, that just as we are really waiting

for the Lord Himself from heaven, things here will be of little value in our eyes; but again, if we estimate earthly things at a high price, does it not show that we are counting upon some years of enjoyment of them, and in our hearts saying, "The Lord will not be here yet," or,

My Lord delayeth His coming {Matt. 24:48, Luke 12:45}?

This jubilee ordinance therefore very sweetly illustrates the fact, that those who are really waiting for God's Son from heaven will be valuing their earthly possessions at a low price, save as to the exceeding privilege of using them in the Lord's service. I ask then, beloved, Are we consistent? What is the true character of our testimony? If the world see us very careful to add field to field, and assiduously labouring to improve the appearances and value of our earthly possessions, must we not seem in their eyes, after all, like citizens of this world, and like people who do not mean or believe what we say, when we declare that the Lord Jesus may come for us at any time? It truly is a solemn question for our hearts, as to how far we show that we are real in saying we are waiting for God's Son from heaven.

Again, if we turn to Jer. 32, we shall find another practical illustration of the subject. Jeremiah was in prison for the truth's sake, and evidently not a poor man; but he was God's servant, and one to whom God had communicated His mind as to the present state of His people, and His future dealings with them and their land. He knew that Nebuchadnezzar would besiege the city, and carry the people away into captivity, and that they would be captives in Babylon for seventy years. He also knew from God, that at the end of that time the people would return to their own land, and again have Jehovah's blessing with them in it. But did Jeremiah believe this? Was the future blessing of the Jews to him a certain reality? Did God mean what He said about this prospective blessing? Most assuredly He did. Jeremiah believed it because God had said it, and he showed forth the reality of his faith and hope by laying out his money *now*, with no hope of benefit through it till *then*. His uncle came to him to buy a field when he was shut up in prison, because the right of redemption was his, when he knew full well that neither he nor his seed would have it in possession, till God brought His people again into their promised and expected blessing. All the details too as to the conveyance of the property in a truly lawful, unquestionable way, only shows the reality of Jeremiah's acting in the whole transaction; for, he adds,

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land
(Jer. 32:15).

And I ask, beloved, does the light of the future glory, which we are called to be partakers of at our Lord's coming, so bear upon the present scene, as to make us feel that the only right use of our means is to lay them out for the Lord, so as to ensure His

Well done {Matt. 25:21, 23}

by and by? And are we thus employed because we believe that time is short, and that the Lord may come at any moment? Is it so? Where are our hearts at this moment, beloved brethren in the Lord? for we are told that where our treasure is, there will our hearts be also? If we can truly sing,

"Jesus shall our treasure be
Now and through eternity,"

it is quite clear that one proof of our really waiting for Him will

be that we are *not* laying up treasures upon earth, but, it may be, laying up treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal.

Take another illustration from 2 Sam. 19. Mephibosheth was deeply attached to David; for the king had showed

the kindness of God {2 Sam. 9:3}

to him; and though he felt himself in his own eyes to be only a loathsome creature --

a dead dog {2 Sam. 9:8}

-- yet the king brought him into such nearness to himself, as to set him at the royal table as one of the king's sons. But during the king's absence, in consequence of Absalom's conspiracy, when God's beloved one was rejected by many, the heart of this object of David's peculiar mercy was deeply affected. His interests, affection, sympathy, and desires were after the absent king. He keenly felt that the king was away, and he longed to see him again. Slandered and deceived as he was, and misrepresented too, during the king's absence, yet we are told that *he went forth to meet him*, and that he neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed till the day that he came to him again in peace. And with what joy of heart did this devoted one meet the king on his return! He felt so satisfied that he desired nothing else, Gifts are valuable; but what are the best gifts when compared with the giver?

Thou and Ziba divide the land, said David. No, said Mephibosheth, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house (see 2 Sam. 19:24-30).

And could it be otherwise with us, beloved, only in a truer and spiritual way, if we really felt, as we ought, that our adorable Lord has been hated and cast out from this scene by the princes of this world, and that, with trimmed lamps and girded loins, we have turned our backs upon it, and are going forth to meet the Bridegroom? If our interests, affections, and sympathies were so undividedly on Him, whom having not seen we love, as they ought, how ardently should we be looking for His coming again!

"To dwell with Him, to see His face,
And sing the glories of His grace."

And will not our affections and interests be always with the real object of our hearts? Can the hearts of men be objectless? Is it not contrary even to nature to be so? And what is *the object* that engages our affections and interests, beloved? Let us thoroughly judge ourselves as to this. Is it the Lord Himself who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood? And can we be really waiting for God's Son from heaven, if our *interests*, *affections*, and *sympathies* are not with Him? Let us ponder this lesson, beloved, and deal unsparingly with ourselves as to the present object of our hearts in the presence of God, where we can afford to do so because of the perfectness of divine love, and where Jesus our Lord is, who went in there by His own blood!

We may profitably turn to another Scripture illustration on this weighty subject. You will find it in Genesis 24. Rebecca had heard the report of Isaac, and though not having seen him, she had believed the testimony, and her heart was won for him. And when the question was raised as to the real object of her soul, neither country nor kindred could detain her from going forth to meet him. She allowed nothing to impede her course; for it was

the beloved son, who had been in a figure offered up upon the altar, and raised from the dead, and now heir of all, that she was so longing to see, and to be with. Her heart was so truly set upon him as her one object, that she unhesitatingly left all behind, and joyfully went on her way, till she saw him face to face, and knew the real enjoyment of his own love. And does not this brief but touching narrative strikingly teach us, beloved brethren, that those who have the hope of the Lord's coming at heart will neither allow the pleadings of friends or kindred, nor the professed claims of country, to impede them one moment in their heavenward course of going out to meet the Bridegroom? Feeling as we should the infinite worth and attractiveness of the Lord Himself, what else could vie with Him? Losers as to present things we may be, sufferers in this present time we must be; but will not separation in affection *unto* Christ Himself always be connected with separation *from* all that is not according to His will? But the claims of Christ are paramount. His divinely moral excellencies outshine every other glory. His infinite worth incomparably surpasses all else that the heart can value. A glimpse of this living, incorruptible Conqueror of death, Satan, and the grave, now Head of all principality and power, dims the eye to all else. The knowledge too that His heart is set upon us, that He ardently looks forward to our being with Him; and His sweet words,

A little while {John 16:14, Heb. 10:37, &c.},

I will come again {John 14:3},

and

I come quickly {Rev. 3:11, 22:7, 12, 20},

when they fall upon us by the Spirit's power, so move the heart's desires of those who are born of God, that we cannot but look up and say,

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}!

What short of this, beloved, could be truly called

the hope which purifieth us even as He is pure {see 1 John 3:3}?

Who else could be rightly said to look, and

wait, for God's Son from heaven {1 Thess. 1:10}?

Should it be otherwise than a living reality in us? Oh, let us not suppose that knowledge of the doctrine, blessed as it is, can necessarily be the same as hope! It may be that many of us may have to judge ourselves as to this; some, too, in whom perhaps this blessed, joyful, sanctifying hope was once bright and powerful, in whom may scarcely now be traced little more than the knowledge of the doctrine. Oh that we may arise and trim our lamps afresh, and address ourselves to the few steps of the wilderness that are yet before us with girded loins! Then, as we have seen, things here will diminish vastly in our esteem; we shall gladly lay out our means in hope of future recompense at the resurrection of the just; we shall so sympathize with Christ, who is still rejected by the world, as to let nothing be in our souls comparable with Him. Our affections will be so singly set upon Him, of whom we have heard such a glorious report by the gospel, as to allow neither country nor kindred, circumstances nor friends, to hinder us from going forth to meet Him. Lord, be thou our sufficiency in this for the glory of thy holy name! Then will our song be --

"I'm waiting for Thee, Lord,
Thy beauty to see, Lord,
I'm waiting for Thee,
For Thy coming again.
Thou'rt gone over there, Lord,
A place to prepare, Lord;
Thy home I shall share,
At Thy coming again.

"Mid danger and fear, Lord,
I'm oft weary here, Lord;
The day must be near
Of Thy coming again.
'Tis all sunshine there, Lord,
No sighing nor care, Lord,
But glory so fair
At Thy coming again.

"Our loved ones before, Lord,
Their troubles are o'er, Lord;
I'll meet them once more
At Thy coming again.
The blood was the sign, Lord,
That marked them as thine, Lord,
And brightly they'll shine
At Thy coming again.

"E'en now let my ways, Lord,
Be bright with Thy praise, Lord,
For brief are the days
Ere Thy coming again.
I'm waiting for Thee, Lord,
Thy beauty to see, Lord;
No triumph for me
Like Thy coming again."

God Our Refuge, Our Resource, And Our Stay

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire, Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge -- (Psa. 46).

It is impossible to apply this psalm *literally* to ourselves. No doubt, like many other psalms, it gives us precious lessons of spiritual instruction; but it contemplates a people on the earth conscious of Jehovah having shaken the earth, wrought desolations in it, and brought a time of peace and blessing into it, having made wars to cease unto the end of the earth, broken the bow and spear, and burnt the chariot in the fire. The faithful here are on the earth; and knowing that this time of peace and blessing has been brought about by judgments, they are conscious of the presence of Jehovah of hosts with them, and that the God of Jacob is their refuge. There can be no question, then, that the people here referred to are Jews, the faithful remnant so often spoken of by the prophets, brought through the time of Jacob's trouble, and celebrating their glorious deliverance. It is clearly a glance at millennial days, with the realized presence of Jehovah of hosts with them.

As I have said, this psalm reads us profitable lessons, not only as setting forth the goodness and faithfulness of Jehovah to His earthly people, but also because it brings God before us as the refuge, the resource, and the stay of the hearts of His faithful ones in time of trouble. This has always been true. Dispensations have varied; but Jehovah changeth not. Both to His earthly people Israel, and to His heavenly people, the Church, God has ever been the alone source of blessing and

deliverance; so that the word abides immutably true,

Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him {Psa. 2:12}.

Let us now look a little, as the Lord may help, at the precious lessons suggested to us in the three practical points -- God our Refuge, God our Resource, and God the Stay of our hearts.

1. GOD OUR REFUGE. In time of trouble, the heart is often ready to turn anywhere for help rather than to God; but faith always looks to God, and to God only. The heart that has thus to do with God finds that His love attracts, His faithfulness encourages, and His power to usward in Christ emboldens us to count upon Him, and that too when all is dark and hopeless on every hand. When God is really our refuge, the triumphant utterance of the soul is --

He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? {Rom. 8:32}.

Happy indeed are those who thus in unfeigned faith make God their refuge! We read that when Asa, king of Judah, relied on Jehovah, he was delivered from a great host of the Ethiopians; but when he relied on the king of Syria, and relied not on the Lord his God, he was rebuked by the prophet for it, and had constant wars in consequence (2 Chron. 16:7-9). When Jehoshaphat trusted in God, he had great success, and God

gave him rest round about; but when he sought to strengthen himself by making affinity with the wicked king of Israel, we are expressly told that the Lord broke his works (2 Chron. 20:37). Again, while David trusted in God, the strongest fleshly foe fell before him in the great Goliath; but when, in unbelief and self-occupation, he

said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul (1 Sam. 27:1),

he pursued a course very dishonoring to God and disastrous to himself; but it is beautiful to perceive in the divine record, that when he again

encouraged himself in the Lord his God (1 Sam. 30:6),

the result was most prosperous, and he became more than conqueror (1 Sam. 18; 27:1; 30:6). And so in a later day, an inspired apostle marks out the Christian's path as calling for constant exercise of faith, when he says,

We walk by faith, not by sight {2 Cor. 5:7}.

And when his heart was well-nigh fainting because of the trouble which came upon him in Asia, he writes,

We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us (2 Cor. 1:9, 10).

But such as really know God as their refuge find Him also their strength, and a very present help in time of trouble. And how blessed for such as are conscious of their own weakness to know where to turn to find real strength; for it is not less true now than in Isaiah's day, that

He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength {Isa. 40:29}.

To rely on self, or friends, or any other arm of flesh, is sure to bring forth, sooner or later, its bitter fruits. To be strong in self-confidence, is only the exhibition of thorough weakness; but to be

strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might {Eph. 6:10};

strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus {see 2 Tim. 2:1};

strong in faith, giving glory to God {Rom. 4:20},

is strength indeed, though always accompanied with the deepest sense of creature weakness. It is also the path in which the Spirit leads us, the sure way of present blessing. Difficulties thus become bread to faith, and faith grows by being exercised. When the energy and contrivances of nature are called into action in divine things, it will need such trying but salutary lessons of correction from the Father of spirits, as shall produce in us the sense of utter helplessness, and compel us to cling to God for strength. In this way we learn the vastly important lesson, that God's strength is made perfect in weakness; so that when we are weak, and then only, are we really strong in the Lord. God then is our refuge, not man. Men should know our moderation (yieldingness); but we should tell God our need.

In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God

(Phil. 4:5, 6).

Is it not well, dear Christian reader, to deal closely with our hearts, in the presence of God, on this deeply-practical and momentous subject? It is easy to speak of our own weakness; but do we so feel it day by day and continually, that we are compelled to look to God for strength? Is it a realized fact with us, that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing; and because of this, are we cast upon the power and goodness of God? Surely it is a precious reality to have God for our refuge and strength, waiting *on* and *for* Him, because He has been, and is, and will be,

a very present help in trouble {Psa. 46:1};

and such always prove that

blessed is the man whose strength is in thee {Psa. 84:5}.

If God be our refuge, we shall find either that He will give us deliverance *from* the trouble, or help *in* the trouble; but blessing it will be, present blessing, in some way or other. It may be painful to find every other refuge fail us, all other streams dry, every cistern broken, and lover and friend stand aloof; but God being really our refuge, we shall find Him our strength, and a very present help. Trials, more or less, we must all have; but what unspeakable blessing there is in making God our refuge! What relief! What rest! How truly the following lines express the utterance of many tried souls who cleave to God in their sorrow:

"Other refuge have I none;
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, oh, leave me not alone!
Still support and comfort me.
All my trust on Thee is stayed;
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing!"

To have the sentence of death in ourselves so thoroughly as to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ, will necessarily bring forth such exercise of soul as to cast us upon God, His power and goodness, and prove that He is our

strength, and a very present help in trouble {Psa. 46:1}.

Surely policy is not faith, nor are human contrivances the Spirit's path. Faith casts each care upon Him who careth for us, though pride and unbelief may take it up again.

2. GOD OUR RESOURCE.

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, &c. (Psa. 46:4).

It may be that many who have proved the blessedness of making God their *refuge* have little acquaintance with Him as their *resource*. It is when barrenness and disappointment are seen stamped on every thing around us, that the heart is fairly tested as to what it is really living upon. The life of faith is upon the Son of God. He has so made known God, that we now know

the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent {see John 17:3}.

God is love, and He has manifested His love in sending

His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins {1 John 4:9, 10}.

God is light, and every thing is naked and open before His eyes; and He has set forth His infinite hatred to sin in forsaking His own Son when bearing our sins, and in condemning sin in the flesh in that spotless One. Thus it is that God is now known; so that instead of being dreaded by us, He is really our hiding-place; and instead of seeking to be away from His presence, we know that He hath reconciled us to Himself, made us stand in His holy presence complete and accepted in the Beloved; and that He abounds in thoughts and purposes of love and grace to us, so that His perfect love not only dismisses all terror from our hearts, but gives us access with confidence. Thus it is that a believer is never so happy as in the conscious enjoyment of God's presence; for God is our resource, the fountain of living waters to our souls. As the apostle expresses it,

We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation {Rom. 5:11}.

We know God as having sent His Son, spoken to us by His Son, given His Son to be a propitiation for our sins; and we know that He came to do the will of God --

Lo, I come to do thy will, O God {Heb. 10:9}!

and this will was, that we should be sanctified and perfected for ever by the one offering of Himself. This is God's love, and this love He commends to us; and thus it is that we have peace with God, and, as we have seen, can now joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is not joy in self, or creatures, or circumstances, but in God, who never disappoints those who thus look to Him. If a prophet with his poor and feeble knowledge of God could say, when there was no blossom or fruit on the vines, the fields and olive-yards barren, and no herd in the stalls,

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation {Hab. 3:18},

how much more does it become us to

rejoice in the Lord always {Phil. 4:4},

and find all our springs of consolation and gladness in the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When we thus deal with God as our resource, we rise above every circumstance, painful or pleasant, and can heartily sing --

"My God, the spring of all my joys,
The life of my delights;
The glory of my brightest days,
The comfort of my nights.

"The opened heavens upon me shine
With beams of sacred bliss;
Jesus proclaims that He is mine,
And whispers I am His.

"Soon shall I leave this world of clay,
At that transporting word,
Run up with joy the shining way
To meet and see my Lord."

If then a remnant of God's earthly people will know God, and His rich blessings to them, so that they can say,

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High {Psa. 46:4},

how much more can we triumphantly rejoice in the aboundings of divine grace to us? As a river becomes wider and deeper the further its windings are traced, so surely does the rich and marvelous grace and goodness of God to us in Christ Jesus become more vast and wondrous to our souls.

I saw,
said John,

a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1).

And if another has said, when contemplating the future,

"There from the river of His grace
Drink endless pleasures in,"

why not now by faith delight our souls in the unutterable goodness and blessing of God to us in Christ?

Beloved, what do we know of God as a resource? Are we happy in the Lord, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, worshiping God in the Spirit, having no confidence in the flesh? Do we know the blessedness of dwelling in the secret place of the most High, and abiding under the shadow of the Almighty? Are we happier in God's presence than in the presence of any one else?

3. GOD OUR STAY.

Be still, and know that I am God {Psa. 46:10}.

It is a great thing for the heart to be steadily looking to God, and quietly waiting on and hoping in Him. We read,

Thou wilt keep Him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee {Isa. 26:3}.

When the people of Israel were well-nigh overwhelmed by the enemy at Pi-hahiroth, they were told to

stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord (Ex. 14:13).

Faith is quiet before God, and casts all care upon Him; but unbelief is restless and plodding. Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, heard His word, and obtained strength for service. Martha's service was well meant, and prompted no doubt by love to the Lord; but her busy activity soon broke down. A prophet of Israel told the people that

their strength is to sit still (Isa. 30:7).

What an unspeakable privilege is it thus to be quietly stayed upon God, remembering His word,

The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace {Ex. 14:14}.

A careless walk with unjudged sin cannot know this. The lofty workings of an unsubdued imagination knows not this blessed place. But to those who know God to be their refuge and strength, and who find their springs of joy in Him, it seems natural to be quietly stayed upon Him. They wait only on and for God, for their expectation is from Him. Such know that God will be exalted, and that our happy privilege is to give unto Him the glory due unto His name.

Dependence, Communion, and Hope

Psalms 16

It is when the soul enters upon and takes possession of its new standing and relationships, as in Christ Jesus in heavenly places, that it necessarily becomes exercised as to the character of our walk down here. The reason is this. As long as the soul -- a true believer, no doubt -- found all its felt need met by the cross, as to sin and guilt, the question of walk was mainly as to morality, or propriety, and consistency in the world. But when he learns, through the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that the cross of Christ also declares the complete end of the first man -- the Adam nature -- as there put under the judgment of God, and he discovers also that the world, in thus rejecting the Son of God, had its doom sealed, he has a different exercise of soul. For all resources thus being cut off by the judgment of God in the cross, both as to man and the world, his confession is that he has no confidence in the flesh, and that he is not of the world. And all this becomes more and more real, as he is able to see that, in a risen and ascended Christ, God in His grace has given him righteousness, life, and completeness before Him; and not only sees, but enters upon and enjoys it in the presence of God. The *conscience* then becomes exercised about a walk down here suited to Him up there -- a walk, not in the flesh, nor according to this present evil age, but suited to the calling and standing given us in Christ -- a life and course fed and strengthened by Him in heaven, in whom God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. The walk now will be in the Spirit, and the life one of faith upon the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. It will therefore be characterized by dependence, communion, and hope, which three points are blessedly brought out in the sixteenth psalm.

This psalm sets forth some of the perfect ways of our blessed Lord in passing through this scene. It is sweet to see that in it there was one object for His heart's delight -- His saints, in whom was all His delight. These, too, He distinguished from the apostate people who were hastening after another god. And if His heart's affections flowed out so blessedly to the faithful little remnant in Israel, what must be His heart's love now to us who are

members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones
{Eph. 5:30}?

Again, taking as He did everything from the hand of His God and Father, and walking always in the perfect sense of obedience to the will of Him that sent Him, He could say,

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places {Psa. 16:6}.

And no doubt the great secret of our going through this world in the enjoyment of the peace of God is walking in the path of obedience, and taking everything, painful or pleasant, out of the hands of our gracious God and Father.

For the reasons above stated, our path necessarily must be one of absolute dependence upon the Lord Jesus. In the days of His flesh, He voluntarily took this place. He was truly God; all fulness was pleased to dwell in Him; but we are told that He, being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself, took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient, &c. We could not take upon ourselves the form of a servant; for we are servants, and never were anything else. In this way it is that the blessed Lord trod the path of faith perfectly, and has left us an example that we should follow His steps. Hence we are told that

when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but *committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously* {1 Pet. 2:23}.

And so in this psalm, the first words are,

Preserve me, O God: for in Thee do I put my trust
{Psa. 16:1}.

How wondrous is the love and lowliness that could take the place of such entire dependence! Surely when hungry for forty days and nights He could have commanded bread to be brought forth, and it could not possibly be withheld; but He chose this place of dependence, and replied,

It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God
{Matt. 4:4}.

Again, on another occasion, when men were seeking to swallow Him up in their cruel hatred, could He not have prayed to His Father, and He would presently have given Him twelve legions of angels? (Matt. 26:53). Most assuredly He could; but He chose rather the path of dependence and obedience as Jehovah's servant, and in this He has left a perfect example for us to follow. I gather, therefore, from this psalm, that a life of absolute and constant dependence will characterize those who follow Christ. As the apostle Paul forcibly puts it,

Having nothing, and yet possessing all things
{2 Cor. 6:10};

having no resources in self, no stock in hand, but unceasing and thorough dependence on Another for all our help. And I doubt not that the true effect of entering into our perfect standing, and full character of blessing in Christ, will be to seek to bring the power of all that into this present scene, as alone suited to Him whom having not seen we love. It is comparatively easy and natural to make God our refuge in great emergencies, and in peculiar trials; but to trust in Him at all times as the constant habit of our lives, in all the details of our brief sojourn here, is another thing. To look to Him about every matter, whether rough or smooth, painful or pleasant,

and to go forth day by day watching His hand, obeying His voice, leaning on His arm, associating all the almightiness of His power, the infiniteness of His wisdom, and perfectness of His love with all our affairs, great or small, at home or abroad, things spiritual or temporal, must mark the character of those who thus live in dependence on God. So perfectly and unceasingly was this path of dependence trodden by the Son of God that we hear Him saying,

I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. . . . Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak (John 12:49, 50).

Here we see the perfectness of the blessed Lord in thus depending on the Father for every word He should speak; and His seeking a solitary place in the wilderness for prayer, getting up a great while before day and going out into a desert place to pray, spending a whole night in prayer, and being usually engaged in prayer before any great event, such as choosing His apostles, the transfiguration, &c., all show the reality of the life of dependence which this perfect One lived. From all this, and other Scriptures, we learn how faith, prayer, and thanksgiving must ever accompany our exercise of real dependence upon God.

Communion, unbroken communion with Jehovah, also marked the path of the blessed man Christ Jesus, the true Son of David. He could surely say,

I have set Jehovah always before me (Psa. 16:8).

Not a moment of unbroken communion did He know, until our sins were laid on Him, and He as the sin-offering was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. Then He who is of purer eyes than to behold evil must abandon His own well-beloved Son, because sins, our sins, were upon Him. Hence that bitterest of all cries was wrung from His holy, pure, and loving heart in deepest agony and distress --

My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1, Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34}.

It could not be otherwise; for God is holy. But, except that time, when His soul was made an offering for sin upon the tree, He was always in uninterrupted communion with the Father. This was His perfectness and joy. He could under all circumstances say,

I do *always* those things that please Him {John 8:29}.

I have set Jehovah *always* before me {Psa. 16:8}.

So should it be with us; for we are called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and He has sent forth the other Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to dwell in us, not only that we might know the things that are freely given us of God, but that we should enjoy them in the communion of the Holy Ghost. With us we easily allow a trifle to come between us and our adorable and loving Lord; and then a process of self-judgment, humiliation, and confession may be called for, in order to our enjoyment again in faith of the unclouded sunshine of His blessed presence inside the veil. In fact, the moment we allow anything to come between us and the Lord, we get away from Him, and our communion becomes interrupted. It is well, therefore, to habitually receive everything from Him, to refer

every matter to Him, to cast all our care upon Him, and to know that all our springs are in Him. As long as He is consciously known as our fountain of living waters, the broken cisterns which come in our way will have little attraction for us. The question should not be so much with us in this day -- How much do you know? as, "How much do you enjoy?" It is impossible to know the Lord Jesus as the satisfying, commanding, absorbing object of our souls, without having that deep, calm joy which is more easily felt than described, and is known in no other way. And there is another point here; He could not only say,

I have set Jehovah always before me;

but could blessedly add,

Because He is at *my right hand*, I shall not be moved {Psa. 16:8}.

And there is an important connection in these two sentences, and highly instructive to us. The Lord always realized the presence of God and power of God with Him -- the right hand of Jehovah. And do not we realize it in our measure, too, according as our hearts are looking to Him? But if we grow cold and careless, it is no marvel that we have little sense of the power and presence of God with us. Instead of this, such souls must necessarily be walking in darkness; and when they need the "right hand" of God to sustain and comfort, they do not find it. Instead of this the Spirit is grieved, and there are questions as to the state, the walk, the conduct to be settled, before the soul can be restored to the enjoyment of His holy presence who is light and love, and again know the present power of the Father of mercies and God of all comfort with them. Oh the blessedness of being able in a goodly measure to say,

I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved!

May our souls realize this, beloved, more and more, and our affections be drawn and fixed upon the Lord Himself, by His mighty and irresistible attractiveness! Surely, Mary made a wise and happy choice when she took her place at Jesus' feet to hear His word; and it was not less pleasing to the Lord than needful and profitable to herself. She learnt that this place of dependence was the secret of comfort and power, as well as the only way to get into the circle of His thoughts and the current of His affections. With what a holy dignity and style we see her afterwards breaking the alabaster box, and pouring the very costly ointment on this precious object of her heart, until the whole house was filled with its sweet fragrance, and she realized the Lord's approval! What a vast range of blessing even now may be known by those who unfeignedly take this place of dependence, and set the Lord always before them! May those of us who have somewhat tasted it know it better; it is wise, I am sure, and

wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace {Prov. 3:17}.

Blessed Lord, it is Thyself, Thy perfectness, Thy glory, we long to see, and now enjoy by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost! for we do say --

“What in Thy love possess I not?
 My star by night, my sun by day;
 My spring of life when parched with drought,
 My wine to cheer, my bread to stay;
 In Thee, my strength, my safe abode
 Now made the righteousness of God.”

But there is a third point to notice in this psalm; it is “hope.” The blessed Lord knew every step of the path of suffering He would have to go. He knew all things that would come upon Him, and could see beyond it all. For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross and despised the shame. His hope was in His God. He could look through all the sufferings and death on Calvary, and the reality of the sepulcher too, and say,

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory (or my tongue) rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (hades); neither wilt thou suffer Thine holy One to see corruption {Psa. 16:9, 10}.

Hence our adorable Lord could contemplate His own death, the actual separation of soul and body, the soul going into hades (the place of departed spirits), and the body into the sepulcher, where all others go to corruption. But this He knew could not be the case with Him; for it was not possible that this spotless, stainless, holy One of God could be holden of death; and we know that He saw no corruption. But more than this, His confidence was in Jehovah the God of resurrection. He knew that, as He said, He would rise again the third day, and that He would be raised again from among the dead by the glory of the Father; nay, more, that He would be seated at the “right hand” of the Majesty on high. Hence He says, referring to resurrection,

Thou wilt shew me the path of life

-- a path which, though beginning from the sepulcher, would extend to the right hand of God, as He so blessedly adds:

In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore {Psa. 16:11}.

What a triumphant path in the power of faith and hope! And surely our privilege, too, is to be rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, yea, to be abounding in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost; for we triumph in His victories, we look forward to eternal blessedness based upon His already accomplished work. And though our destiny is to share His glory, yet how different is the path of hope for us from what it was to Him! But if He went down into death and the grave, and grappled with sin, Satan, the grave, and judgment, what was it for, but to give us present and everlasting triumph over all these enemies and intruders into God’s once fair creation? Our hope, then, is not to follow Him into death; but, because of His having accomplished that triumphant work for us, it can now be said,

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye {1 Cor. 15:51, 52},

and

caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord {see 1 Thess. 4:17}.

We thus

desire our house from heaven, not,
 as the apostle says,

that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life {see 2 Cor. 5:2-4}.

Our precious Lord therefore, by His death, and triumph over death, Satan, and the grave, has given us a near way into glory at His coming -- a momentary journey, a rapid flight, like a lightning-flash, changed and translated, and so to be for ever with the Lord.

“Then shall we fully know,
 Not till then, how much we owe.”

Oh the perfect bliss of this hope, based on the atoning work, and made certain to us by the risen Jesus having gone into heaven by His own blood! How divinely real it is! A curtain only, as it were, between us at this moment and the positive and unchanging possession of eternal glory! The Head in heaven and members on earth, already joined by one Spirit, soon to meet in the air! How very near this may be! We know how intensely the heart of Jesus looks forward to it. His desire is, that we should be with Him, and behold His glory. The thrice-repeated

I come quickly,
 of Him who is

the Bright and Morning Star,
 should nerve our souls to hearty, loving response; for the Spirit indites the cry in us --

Come.

The Spirit and the bride say, Come {Rev. 22:7-20}

Happy those who so know the blessedness of the life of faith, as to tread the path of dependence, communion, and hope!

“When faith and hope shall cease,
 And love abides alone,
 Then shall I see Him face to face,
 And know as known.
 Still shall I lift my voice;
 His praise my song shall be;
 And I will in His love rejoice,
 Who died for me.”

Grace and Service

1 Samuel 22:1, 2; 2 Samuel 23

This time of David's history was somewhat illustrative of our own; there were two parties in the land -- Saul's and David's. They were very distinct, and so different that they could not be reconciled. Saul, the natural man of self-will and pride, was the head of the party which represents the world -- its greatness, glory, strength, and religiousness. David, however, was God's man, the man after God's own heart, and God was most remarkably with him. The mass of the people was with Saul; only a little flock with David. The royal court and its grandeur clustered around Saul, while David was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, though anointed and chosen of God. But divine judgment was in store for Saul and his associates, while David, though despised and rejected, was destined by God to be set upon the throne of the kingdom. Those, therefore, at this time whose sympathies were with Saul were among the prosperous and honorable of the world, while those who cast in their lot with David had suffering and conflict before reigning with him. The great, and noble, and wise of this world were trying to satisfy themselves with the social, political, and religious occupations which revolved around the royal throne of Saul; while David was the center of gathering for those who were in relationship with him, as well as a sure refuge for the destitute and distressed. True there was a religious camp in Israel professedly owning the true God; but David was outside it with God. Not the royal throne of Israel yet for David, but Adullam's cave; for he was to shadow forth this present time when Jesus is despised and His rightful claims disowned by the world. The vital question in those days was whether Saul or David should be honored and obeyed. The vital question now is, whether to be of the world, or confessing and serving the Lord Jesus Christ. It must be one or the other. To be subject to the claims of both is simply impossible.

Ye cannot serve God and mammon {Matt. 6:24, Luke 16:13}.

To be of the world is to be thoroughly opposed to Christ. Nothing can be more distinct and sweeping than the divine statement, that

the friendship of the world is enmity with God. Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God {James 4:4}.

We know that Jesus said of His own --

They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world {John 17:14, 16}.

The aged apostle John most solemnly declared --

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness (or the wicked one) {1 John 5:19}.

Adullam, then, which means "their testimony," was the place where those who were in relationship with the man after God's own heart were gathered. It was really the outside place -- outside the camp -- the place of rejection and testimony. David

was the attractive center. We are told that

his brethren and all his father's house went down thither to him (1 Sam. 22:1).

And so now; it is the One whom God gave and sent, His beloved Son, whom men despised and rejected, and still refuse, who is really the center of gathering for all who are in relationship with Him. We remember His precious words:

Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20}.

This is enough. And those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren know the blessedness of being thus gathered in His name, and of enjoying His presence as the great and only center of gathering. The Spirit gathers them thus.

But more than this; the poor, and needy, and distressed found a refuge in David. And what could more strikingly show forth the grace of the Lord Jesus in saving sinners, who still calls,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}!

"Welcome, all by sin oppressed,
Welcome to the Savior's breast."

Hence we are told that

every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them (1 Sam. 22:2).

And is not this the gracious attitude that the earth-rejected Jesus still takes toward guilty man? Is it not sinners, enemies, lost ones, that He receives? "Not the righteous; sinners Jesus came to call." Is it not toward such that His compassionate heart yet moves? Does not His long-suffering mercy linger over men in their guilt and misery? Is He not the alone Savior, the only refuge and door of escape from the wrath to come? Surely He welcomes and gives eternal life and peace to distressed and anxious souls! Blessed be His name, He still forgives the vilest sinner that turns to Him. He dries up the tear, and delights to hush the groan of the sin-stricken, to make the most discontented heart to find rest and real joy in His most blessed presence. His loving cry to lost and guilty ones is as true as ever,

Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37};

yea, more than this, He brings the soul to know what peace and joy in believing are; for He

suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, *to bring us to God* {see 1 Pet. 3:18}.

How blessed this is! Well might an inspired apostle exclaim,

Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though

He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich (2 Cor. 8:9).

But observe, it is said that

David became *a captain over them* {1 Sam. 22:2};

and here we have illustrated the two great principles of Christianity; viz., receiving Christ Jesus as the Savior whom God sent, and then being subject to Him -- owning Him as Lord. The latter all, sooner or later, *must do*; for

at the name of Jesus every knee must bow {see Pil. 2:10},

in heaven, in earth, and in the infernal regions. It is simply a question as to time. Those who now thus bow to Jesus, and own Him as Savior and Lord, have eternal life, and shall never perish. But it is to be feared that many who speak of Him as "our Savior" are going on doing their own will, and not owning His Lordship. This is a fatal mistake. As we have said, all must own Him Lord. No doubt that the great religious system around us, commonly called Christendom, is largely built upon this fatal mistake of the lip confession of "our Savior," without their ever having gone to Jesus, the true David, as distressed, as in debt, and discontented, and tasted the sweetness of His grace in welcoming them; and therefore, as willing captives at His feet, rejoiced to be subject to Him. And yet having to do with Christ Jesus, both as Savior and Lord, are the essentials of Christianity. Nothing less will do. And it is the attempt to separate these two foundation truths, that Jesus is the only Savior, and Lord of lords, that accounts for the nominal profession and caricatures of Christianity abounding on every hand. As Jude says,

Certain men have crept in, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and *denying* the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ {see Jude 4},

or, as it might be rendered,

denying the only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ {see Jude 1:4, New Trans., JND}.

Those, however, who have had to do with the Lord Jesus as their Savior, as the One who loved them, and gave Himself for them, know Him to be precious, and the altogether lovely; and their hearts are constrained to take the place of subjection to Him, and consecration to His will, obedience to His word, devotedness to Him as the commanding and absorbing object of their hearts.

But there is another thing. This is the time when faith is tried, and the Lord is served. Few think what wonderful things are going on. Now we are in great ignorance as to how far people are true to the Lord or not; but the time will come when every one will be made manifest, every hidden thing be unmasked, and every secret matter brought to light. Then every thing will appear in its true value. Those who are thought much of now may be altogether absent then from the list of the faithful; and many whose service is now esteemed at a low value, may then shine forth to the abundant praise and honor of the Lord Jesus. But every thing now hidden shall be disclosed, for we must all be manifested at the judgment-seat of Christ, according to the deeds done in the body, and then shall every man have praise of God. So with David's men. From the starting from Adullam's cave many a conflict was

gone through, many a peril endured, many a battle fought; but at the end the worthies appear, according to the real worth of their service and character of their devotedness to David. The record stands in connection with the

last words of David {2 Sam. 23:1},

and remarkable disclosures take place. The service, too, was most varied. Like the members of the body of Christ, each seems to have had a distinct path of service; but the honor of David was the touchstone, and the center around which all revolved. No doubt every believer has a distinct line and measure of service allotted to him by the Lord now, and which no one can do but himself;

for to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ (Eph. 4:7).

He gave to every man his work. As has been said, "*Now* we little know what is being done for the glory of God, but by and by all will come out according to its real worth." So it was with David's men; and we find it recorded in 2 Sam. 23. David's career had well-nigh come to a close, and the judgment and glory of Solomon were soon coming upon the scene. It is here, therefore, before the glory of the kingdom, that David's worthies have their honors publicly set forth.

In glancing at the divine record, we may notice that in v. 8 it is said that Adino the Eznite slew eight hundred with his spear at one time. His service therefore stands forth in all its worth; and the detail is most accurate. The exact character of his victories are recorded. And no doubt by and by it will be seen that many servants of Christ have succeeded in vanquishing by the power of the gospel many hard-hearted enemies to God, and in bringing them as willing captives to the feet of Jesus. All this service and its detail will not be forgotten. It is evident that the apostle Paul looked forward to the joy of seeing the persons in glory as his crown, to whom he had been made useful by the preaching of the gospel.

For,
said he, writing to the Thessalonian believers,

what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy (1 Thess. 2:19, 20).

The service, too, of Eleazar the son of Dodo is particularly brought out; for he stood manfully for the claims of David in the face of mighty Philistines, and at a time

when the men of Israel had gone away {see 2 Sam. 23:9}.

His persevering faithfulness is recorded by the Spirit. We are told that

he smote the Philistines till his hand was weary, and his hand clave unto the sword {2 Sam. 23:10}.

It is also noticed that he wrought a great victory, and that others in consequence came after only

to spoil {2 Sam. 23:10}.

So it is now. At times, when almost all have turned away from contending for the truth, some valiant servant of the Lord has withstood the foe, his hand cleaving to the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and has accomplished a great victory, of which many a child of God coming after has reaped

precious fruit.

Nor could the service of Shammah be unnoticed; for though it was only a piece of ground full of lentils which he defended and secured for David, yet he determined not even to yield that right of David to the enemy. It is worthy of remark also that the courage and faithfulness of this man came out at a time when the people, instead of standing true, actually

fled from the Philistines {2 Sam. 23:11}.

But both in 2 Sam. 23:10, and 12 the Holy Ghost carefully notices that

the Lord wrought a great victory;

for while God accepts the valiant deeds of His servants, and puts them to their account, yet it is all done in His strength, and by the grace He gives, so that to Him all the glory is due. If in one place it is said that

God gave testimony to the word of His grace {see Acts 14:3},

an apostle also speaks by the same Spirit of one whom he had begotten in his bonds, as if he had actually accomplished the man's conversion. But it shows how gracious God is in owning our instrumentality, and making much of our little service and faithfulness, though we can truly add,

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory {Psa. 115:1}.

The devotedness of the mighty men at the well of Bethlehem, also stands forth in brightness and distinction in the records of divine truth. In it we see not so much victory, except it be victory over self, but personal devotedness to the man after God's own heart. They counted not their lives dear to themselves, so that they might cheer and refresh the heart of David. Like another in a later day, each might have said,

Neither count I my life dear to myself, so that I might finish my course with joy (Acts 20:24).

So then these mighty men brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem to refresh the spirit, and gratify the desire of their beloved king. But precious as this self-sacrificing service was to him, he would not drink, but poured it out unto the Lord, saying,

Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this: is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives? therefore he would not drink it (2 Sam. 23:17).

But the devotedness of these mighty men stands out conspicuously among David's worthies.

Abishai's courage also in slaying three hundred of the king's enemies is next recorded; and Benaiah's valor in accomplishing many mighty acts is not forgotten. The two lion-like Moabites, of whom it had been said that not one should enter the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation, he defied and overcame. Nor did he hesitate in a snowy day to go down into a pit and slay a lion, like the faithful now who have sometimes to enter into closest conflict with Satan under most distressing circumstances, and overcome him by the sword of the Spirit. He slew also an Egyptian with his own spear; as may sometimes now be witnessed, when the worldling, who opposes the servants and truth of God, is vanquished by the

very weapon he himself wielded against them. Thus God turns the wrath of man to praise Him. Many other names are also ranked among David's worthies without any special mark of devotedness, or of victories being recorded.

On the other hand, however, it is most solemn to notice the absence of some of the best known among David's men. And why are they not found here? The silence is quite arresting, and bids us search the Scriptures for the reason. It is true that the name of Jonathan does appear in verse 32; but whether it be the Jonathan who loved David as his own soul or not we cannot tell; but certainly, if it be so, there is no particular record of his devotedness. The reason is obvious; for Jonathan was most earnest and thorough in his attachment to David up to a certain point; but he never broke with his kindred, and the royal court, to bear the reproach of David, nor took the place of rejection outside the camp. Consequently, we scarcely hear of Jonathan after they had made a covenant in the wood, when it is significantly stated that

David remained in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house {see 1 Sam. 23:18},

until we are told of his very solemn death (1 Sam. 23:18). Having left David in the wood, and gone to his home, he went out to battle with his father against the Philistines, and was slain with his father, and their bodies fastened as a spectacle against the wall of Bethshan. Though Jonathan's deep and warm attachment to David remain without the smallest room for question, yet his adherence to the house of Saul by natural ties reads us a most solemn and instructive lesson, because it seems to have cost him his life, and hindered his full character of service to the man after God's own heart.

But however it may be as regards Jonathan who so loved David, other names are entirely absent from the list of mighty men, nor is Scripture quite silent as to the reason why. We may notice that the greatest warrior, the wisest counselor, and one of the chief religious officials are all absent from the list of the king's worthies. We refer to Joab, Ahithophel, and Abiathar.

Joab was nephew of David (1 Chron. 2:18), and commander-general of his forces. He showed much warlike courage, but was revengeful, and all through seems not to have been in communion with the king's mind. He treacherously assassinated Abner to revenge his brother Asahel, whom he had killed in self-defence (2 Sam. 2:23), and he also slew Amasa, whom David had promoted to be his general-in-chief, out of jealousy of his being his rival (2 Sam. 20:10). These, according to Solomon, were better men, and more righteous, than he; and these assassinations, as well as his slaying Absalom with his own hand contrary to the express command of the king, were matters of great sorrow to David. However, Joab went on for many years outwardly and officially espousing David's cause. When many in Israel fell away in the time of Absalom's conspiracy, Joab remained with the king; but in after years, when the king grew old and feeble, he sided with the self-willed Adonijah, contrary to the will of God, and the express desire of the king. Instead therefore of Joab being in the list of David's worthies (though his brother Asahel and Joab's armour-bearer were there), this man of rank and power,

of celebrity too among men, fell under the judgment of Solomon when he took unto him his great power, and ruled the kingdom in righteousness. According to righteous judgment he had not been true to David,

had shed the blood of war in peace {see 1 Kings 2:5},

so that his hoar head was not allowed to go down to the grave in peace. Thus was he humbled instead of being honored.

Ahithophel, David's counselor, and highly extolled for his wisdom, is also absent from this list of worthies, though Eliam his son ranked among them. Though he was David's companion and familiar friend, yet in time of temptation he wholly fell away, and showed that, with all his sagacity, his heart was not true to God's anointed. His wisdom was so remarkable, that it is recorded that

the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counseled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God {2 Sam. 16:23};

but no amount of wisdom will compensate for lack of uprightness and true devotedness. Accordingly, in David's time of adversity, when his interests seemed weak and declining, through the people's unfaithfulness in the time of Absalom's conspiracy, he, like another Judas, turned traitor, and afterwards hanged himself and died. Thus we see that the man accounted so wise in Israel was not ranked with David's worthies by the inspired penman, neither with the man so celebrated for his courage and warlike power.

Now let us look at the religious man in Israel, one of the chief priests, the highest character of official dignity in Israel. Why was not his name in the honored list? True it is that David had shown him special favor and affection, in trying to allay his troubled spirit, by saying,

Abide thou with me, fear not: for he that seeketh my life seeketh thy life: but with me thou shalt be in safeguard (1 Sam. 22:23).

And is it possible that after this he was not found true to the king? Indeed he was not; for when the usurping Adonijah said,

I will be king {1 Kings 1:5},

he, with Joab, fell away, and helped Adonijah; and when Solomon entered upon the kingdom in righteous rule (type of a greater than Solomon, who will ere long establish His throne in righteousness), Abiathar, instead of being commended, was the subject of public humiliation by being deposed from the office of priesthood.

Thus we see, while the unpretending, devoted, and afflicted Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 23:39), and many more remained in time of trial true to David, there were those who stood foremost in Israel for their strength, wisdom, or official religiousness, who were judged and abased instead of commended and exalted when the kingdom was set up in glory. And, in applying this to ourselves, have we not need to cry,

Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe {Psa. 119:117}?

What lessons of peculiar solemnity the record of these people presents to us, and surely awaken in our consciences the grave importance of seeing that we are true to our Lord Jesus during this time of His personal absence and rejection, so that when

He comes we may have His precious commendation --

Well done, good and faithful servant {Matt. 25:23}!

These omissions in the list of David's faithful ones are painfully significant, and forcibly remind us of the prophet's words:

Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in His might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord (Jer. 9:23, 24).

Love

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love Him, because He first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also (1 John 4:7-21).

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:1, 2).

It is remarkable that the same apostle who was inspired to write so sternly as to the *truth* should be the instrument employed also to write so elaborately on *love*. The fact is, we cannot really have truth without love, or love without truth. Both were perfectly blended in Christ.

He was full of grace and truth {see John 1:14}.

To hold both love and truth together, according to God, is our practical difficulty. We say little to each other about love, because we are conscious how little we manifest it. And if it be true, as I believe it is, that we never know any part of God's truth really till we accept it, and walk in it, this may account for our knowing so little, and saying so little, about love. Besides, it often costs us very little to be interested in truth; but to walk in love, while always connected with blessing to our souls, is also contrary to the natural selfishness of the heart. Still we must remember that the subject of love occupies a large and prominent place in the inspired epistles, and it seems to be better and wiser to acknowledge our shortcomings in practicing it than to ignore it in our teaching.

Love is the essential of Christianity. Where this is wanting there is no true Christianity. The subject therefore is vital, and its claims upon our attention paramount. A splendid gift is sometimes very attractive; an intelligent mind, as to the mysteries of Scripture, often highly valued; a self-sacrificing person greatly extolled; and yet all these things, if love be wanting, are only like so many clouds without rain, or wells without water. The seraphic tongue and riveting eloquence of some men enchant crowds of eager listeners, who hang upon their lips, wondering what the next astounding burst may be, and extol the speaker to the skies; while the quiet, unobtrusive saint, diligently engaged in loving ministry to the souls or bodies of the needy children of God, is a work too small for many to deign to notice; but in God's sight how different! The one may be only an empty noise, no sooner heard than gone for ever; and the other the fruit of the Spirit, having the value of everlastingness divinely stamped upon it. Yea, says the

apostle,

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity (or love), I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

Thus we see that love is the essential, the vitality of Christianity. And at the close of the same chapter we find that, important and precious as faith is, and hope also, yet love is there again set forth in its superlative importance as the very key-stone of the arch, and laying hold of faith and hope by its mighty grasp in present reality and power.

And now abideth faith, hope, love; but *the greatest {greater} of these* is love {see 1 Cor. 13:13}.

In almost all the writings of the apostles the same pre-eminent place is given to love. In the fruit of the Spirit, in all the precious variety which its clusters present, love stands at the top of the list --

The fruit of the Spirit is *love*, joy, peace, &c. (Gal. 5:22).

Or, if the wondrous mystery of the Church be unfolded to the Ephesian believers, that marvelous subject which has been brought out in these last days with such clearness to the joy and comfort of our hearts, yet, precious as it is, all the attempts for its practical acknowledgment would be futile unless love were energizing our souls. Hence we read,

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in *love*; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace {Eph. 4:2, 3}.

And to secure edifying, love is the aliment, the mainspring of all; for by speaking the truth *in love*, the body edifies itself in love (Eph. 4). And so in Colossians, after the apostle has enumerated a variety of earnest exhortations as to practical

walk, he puts love again in the highest place of eminence. He says,

Above ALL these things.

Mark,

Above (or over) ALL these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness {Col. 3:14};

that is, that no bond can hold things together perfectly that is not wrought by the mighty power of love. Valiant then as Paul was for the truth, the vessel too used by the Lord to communicate to us the mystery of the Church, and other great truths of Christianity, yet can language, I ask, possibly convey to our hearts more thoroughly the vital and prominent aspect in which he sets love before us?

And now let us hear the instruction of another inspired apostle. Peter owns the love of the brethren as the fruit of obedience to the truth in the power of the Spirit, and encourages them to love one another with a pure heart fervently. And, like another inspired by the same Spirit, after many practical exhortations, he gives love an importance beyond all else that he had said.

Above ALL these things

-- Mark again here,

ABOVE (or before) *all* these things have fervent love among yourselves;

not love merely, but warm, earnest, burning love to one another;

for love will cover the multitude of sins (1 Pet. 1:22; 4:8).

And hear also the third apostle's inspired statement on the all-importance and priceless value of love, who leads us up at once to the same climax by assuring our hearts that

love is of God {1 John 4:7},

and that

God is love {1 John 4:8, 16};

and after solemnly informing us that

He that is of God heareth us, and he that is not of God heareth not us {see 1 John 4:6},

he brings forth love as the vital test of Christianity:

He that LOVETH is born of God, and knoweth God. He that LOVETH NOT knoweth not God; for God is love {see 1 John 4:7, 8}.

The apostles thus stand before us with one voice, writing at various times and to different persons, to assert the vital character of love, and that it is the essential and superlative element of true Christianity, the grand, distinguishing, unmistakable test as to who really knows God, and who knows not God.

1. First of all, let us not fail to notice that we here read that

God is love.

This is not merely that God loves, most precious true as it is, but that His nature is love. It is equally true that

He is light {1 John 1:5}.

His essential nature is light, therefore cannot possibly fail to make every hidden thing manifest; but it is also blessedly true

that the activities of His nature are loving; for He is love. We know, too, that God is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works; and, as the cross of Christ most thoroughly sets forth, that He does not sacrifice His holiness to love, or His love to holiness, but His nature is love. "God is love." This faith receives and enjoys, because it is God's revelation of Himself. But here the fact is turned to practical account; for if God's nature is love, and we are born of God, it is clear that the moral qualities of a child must be according to those of the Father. The apostle therefore says,

Beloved, let us love one another: for *love is of God*; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God, He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love {1 John 4:7, 8}.

The exhortation that we should "love one another" is founded, then, on the fact that we are born of God, and therefore have a nature that loves; for God is love. The fact is also stated that the person who loves according to God must be born of God. It is impossible therefore that one who is born of God can be one who *loves not*. He may be in a bad state of soul, and the divine work in him much obscured by carnal ways and associations, but it is as natural for the new nature which we have, as a new creation in Christ, to love, as for the old Adam-nature to be selfish and to hate. Hence you find the apostle Paul, in writing to the Thessalonian saints, declaring that they *are taught of God to love one another*. And how many souls, before they were established in Christ, have found comfort from this text, which assured them they were God's children --

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we *love* the brethren {1 John 3:14}!

They know this to be true of them. They know well that the poorest man by the roadside, who shows plainly that he is the Lord's, engages His affections and interests more than all the princes of this world who are enemies of the Lord of glory. Every one therefore that is born of God loves, and loves the brethren -- they are objects of his tenderest regard, because they are God's; and he knows also that the matters of one of His feeblest children are of more importance to God than the political movements of the whole of Europe. Oh the blessedness of having passed from death unto life, of being born of God, and of knowing God; for God is love!

The nature of God being love, He Himself is the spring of it; for

herein is love, not that we loved God;

that is, that love did not originate in us, but that

He loved us {1 John 4:10};

therefore,

he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him {1 John 4:16}.

Hence the word of the gospel is not about our love, but about His love; and those who have eternal life can say,

We have known and believed the *love that God hath to us* {1 John 4:16}.

2. This leads us to notice, secondly, that God has manifested His love. It is not only a divine revelation that "God is love," but that He loves, and loves us, and that this has been most

blessedly and suitably manifested to us in the gift of Jesus.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is *love*, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9, 10).

The love of God then to us has come out, both in its richness and freeness, springing only from God (not from us), coming down to us in all our uncleanness and ruin, putting away our sins, and giving us life -- eternal life. How exactly, then, this love has come to us where we were, and met our need; and it is this surely which the gospel declares, for

God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8)

The depth, therefore, of this love extended to us when in our sins, and as it were on the brink of hell; it met us by Christ making atonement for our sins, even when we were dead in sins; and God, having raised up Jesus from the dead, and given us life, righteousness, and acceptance in Him, now exalted to His own right hand, the object of the grace of God so far is attained; which is, that we might *live* through Him. The circle of divine love is thus complete. It is from heaven to heaven. It flows from the throne of heaven down to where we were as dead in sins and guilty before God; and having accomplished atonement for us by the death of the cross, it takes us up in risen life to stand in Him who is gone back into heaven at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Surely this is

“Love that no tongue can teach,
Love that no thought can reach;
No love like His.
God is its blessed source;
Death ne’er can stop its course;
Nothing can stay its force;
Matchless it is.”

The purpose of God then, in thus manifesting His love, was, that we should be fitted for, and able, in the power of a new life -- eternal life -- to enter into and enjoy His own blessed presence for ever. Christ suffered for our sins, *to bring us to God*; and divine love will not rest in its activities toward us till we are brought there bodily at the coming of our Lord. Meanwhile we are objects of His love and care; but such are some of the characteristics of this manifested love.

Here, however, again the Holy Ghost, by the aged apostle, insists upon this as another motive for our loving one another. He says:

Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another (1 John 4:11).

And if the question be asked what the measure of our love to one another should be, we are elsewhere told:

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren (1 John 3:16).

When the standard is divinely set up, it could not be less than what marked the perfect One, who

loved the Church, and gave Himself for it {Eph. 5:25}.

But we may be assured that the more we enter into and enjoy

God’s love in its depth, and height, and suitability to us, the more our heart’s affections, sympathies, and ministrations will flow out toward our brethren. Thus we see that not only because we are born of God, who is love, do we love, but occupied in heart and conscience with His love which has been manifested, shall we find it natural to us to love. Moreover, we shall find that practicing loving ways is the path of blessing and assurance for our own souls.

Hereby (that is loving in deed and in truth) we *know* that we are of the truth, and *shall assure our hearts before Him* (1 John 3:19).

How encouraging, too, to us is the astounding statement:

He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in Him (1 John 4:16).

Who, then, is of the truth? He who loves. Who is dwelling in God and God in him? He who dwells in love. Who is born of God and knoweth God? Every one that loveth. Who have passed from death unto life? Those who love the brethren. How much ought we to love the brethren? To lay down our lives for them, because He laid down His life for us. And if we search Scripture for the great testimony we should bear towards those around, we are told by our adorable Lord --

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another {John 13:35}.

And the measure of this new commandment is --

As I have loved you, that ye also should love one another (John 13:34, 35).

But divine love working in us can never lead us contrary to the truth; for truth is divine also. Hence it is written:

This is love, that we keep His commandments; and by this we *know* that we love the children of God when we love God, and keep His commandments {see 1 John 5:2, 3}.

True love must always therefore have to do with God its source, who is love, and it flows in the channel of divine truth. Hence love in activity in us and obedience are inseparable; for

this is love, if we walk after His commandments {see 2 John 6}.

As our blessed Lord also taught:

He it is that loveth Me that keepeth My commandments {see John 14:21}.

It would be unsound, therefore, to be putting love against truth, or truth against love. We are taught to

walk in truth {3 John 4},

and

walk in love {Eph. 5:2};

and are told that the closing act of man’s impiety will be to receive not the love of the truth. It is, then, a delusion to talk of holding the truth with an unloving heart. It is the highest folly to extol gift when love is absent. And we may be assured it is a snare of Satan to persuade people they have the truth when it has only reached the intellect, and one of his chiefest wiles to get men to hold the truth in unrighteousness. Whatever be the pretensions, it is certain that there can be no godliness without love; for God is love, And how marvelously has His love been manifested to us! Be assured, beloved brethren, that

what we want in these last closing days is to be so dwelling in God's presence, who is love, to be so drinking in His manifested love to us in Christ, so practicing love in deed and in truth, dwelling in love, and thus dwelling in God, until every cold recess of our hearts is so warmed as not easily to be chilled; for many waters cannot quench love. Thus fired with divine love, affections will flow upward to God, onward in the truth, and outward to our brethren, and in bowels of mercies to the ungodly. Love is always intelligible to almost the lowest form of the human mind, and can reach the coldest heart, while the truth we utter may pass by them as if they heard it not. How wise, then, is the inspired direction to

 speak the truth in love {see Eph. 4:15}!

The gospel, while it is the message of God's love, yet it is also God's truth. Hence we read of

 the truth of the gospel {Gal. 2:5, 14; Col. 1:5},

and of persons

 obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren {1 Pet. 1:22}.

It is divine *love* that sends forth the *truth*; and by the truth we have to do with God, who is love, and we therefore love. How truly, then, the gospel is the ministry of grace and truth, because it is concerning Him who is

 full of grace and truth {John 1:14}!

And how ruinous the separation must be of those two things which God has joined together!

3. A third point I would notice, in considering this most precious subject, is the kind or manner of love which God has bestowed upon us. In the beginning of the third chapter we read,

 Behold, *what manner of love* the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God {1 John 3:1}.

Here we have the *relationship* which divine love has brought us into. It would have been deep mercy to save us from hell merely, without bringing us into any relationship with God. Or, it would have been rich grace to have taken us to glory and made us servants. But this would not suit the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His purpose was to have us as children before Him in love. Hence we are children by calling -- not merely named children, but "called" into this nearest and most blessed relationship with God. And this, too, to be known and enjoyed *now*.

 Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God (1 John 3:1, 2).

Thus the way in which God has brought home His unutterable love to us, is to have us in this highest and most endearing relationship with Himself, both by being born of God and called children. Hence, elsewhere we are told, that we

 have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father {Rom. 8:15}.

And so truly is this relationship recognized, that Jesus the Lord is

 not ashamed to call us brethren {see Heb. 2:11}.

It is not, I repeat, a calling and blessing to be known only in

the future, but to be known *now*.

 Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God {1 John 3:2};

and the contemplation of this glorious fact so animated the dear apostle's heart, that he at once soars in spirit right on to the glory, and adds,

 It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when He shall appear, *we shall be like Him*; for we shall *see Him as He is* {1 John 3:2}.

Our destiny therefore is to be like Christ,

 conformed to the image of God's Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren {Rom. 8:29}.

This present relationship with God as His children necessarily links us on with the glory, and makes us strangers here and unknown by the world; for

 if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together {Rom. 8:17}.

How blessed is this relationship! how wondrous the manner of love that has brought us into it! and how precious the thought that by and by the world will know that the Father has loved us as He has loved His Son!

 "So dear, so very dear to God,
 More dear I cannot be;
 The love wherewith He loves His Son,
 Such is His love to me."

But more than this. Because we are "children" we are "brethren," and that as an actual relationship formed by divine love. And we shall find, I believe, that all correct conduct flows out of relationship. The wife's ways to her husband, the children's conduct to their parents, the brother's intercourse with each other, and the servant's behaviour to his master, are all different, having different feelings and activities; and the more the reality of the relationship is entered into, the more consistent will be the maintenance of the duty flowing from it.

And first of all let us ask ourselves solemnly the question, Are we in the enjoyment of this precious relationship, formed by divine sovereign grace, of

 sons of God {Rom. 8:14}?

It is this which the Spirit of God makes known to us, and gives us to realize; for it is by

 the Spirit of His Son sent forth into our hearts that we cry, Abba, Father {see Gal. 4:6}.

If we are not habitually dealing with God as our Father, the state of our souls will be most seriously defective. We now know the Father, whose ways are always perfect as a Father toward us. If it be the place of a Father to care for, provide for, comfort, deliver, and bless His children, this He does perfectly for us; as our blessed Lord said:

 If ye (with all your love, forethought, diligence, and care) being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him? {Matt. 7:11}.

Do we know, I ask, the habit of taking every thing *from* our Father, and referring every thing *to* Him, being assured that

“A father’s hand will never cause
His child a needless tear”?

Surely the divine love that has thus called us into this near relationship would have us practically enter upon it and enjoy it; for what can so encourage our hearts in time of difficulty, comfort us in sorrow, or enable us to rest in the day of adversity, like the sense of the loving and true God being our Father. This, too, will always warrant our expectation from Him; for

He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? {Rom. 8:32}.

As we have before observed, this is connected also with another relationship, that of brethren, for all who are begotten of God are brethren; and just, too, as the reality of this relationship is recognized will our practice be regulated; for all being partakers of the same divine nature, and all indwelt by the same Spirit, we cannot but love one another.

He that *loveth not*, knoweth not God (1 John 4:8).

The world no doubt will hate us; for, because they know not God, they do not know us. They have not this new nature; and, however refined and amiable they may appear, they have no love for God or for His people. Love to the brethren -- all those whom Christ is not ashamed to call His brethren -- is the proof of vital Christianity. I repeat, how many a dear soul has been encouraged by those precious words, when deeply anxious,

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren {1 John 3:14}?

This, then, is a new, a heavenly, and an everlasting relationship, and becomes another and most powerful motive for love. For when we look on our brethren in Christ, does not the thought often cross our minds, “I shall be with those loved ones *for ever*”? And if so, how can we fail to minister to them, care for them, or comfort them *now*? How can the heart thus exercised hesitate to weep with them that weep, and to rejoice with them that do rejoice? If Joseph used the fact of relationship as a motive for unanimity and peace when his brethren departed from Egypt, saying,

See that ye fall not out by the way {Gen. 45:24},

oh, how much more should our hearts flow out in varied forms of suited love to one another, as fruit in season, because we are born from above, and brought into an eternal relationship with God and with each other! If as saints we descend from the spiritual platform on which the grace of God has set us, to become carnal, and walk as men, we shall begin to look at one another with human feelings rather than divine, and thus the flow of brotherly affection, brotherly care, and brotherly sympathy, will be greatly set aside. Thoroughly removed from the heart love cannot be; for

he that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him {1 John 5:1},

and

he that loveth not his brother abideth in death {1 John 3:14}.

The question may be asked, Is it not possible to love God

without loving the brethren? The unmistakable answer of the Holy Ghost is,

If a man *say* I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? {1 John 4:20}.

The source of love, however, is always carefully marked as God Himself.

We love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

His love is first, not ours.

Thus we have seen that the Holy Ghost, by the word of eternal truth, sets before us three motives for the outflow of love from our hearts; first, being born of God, who is love, we have a new nature, which cannot but love, and that in everything according to God; secondly, that God having so wondrously manifested His love to us when sinners in sending His own Son into the world, that we might live through Him, we ought also to love one another; thirdly, being now brought into new and everlasting relationship to God and to each other, love to the brethren becomes the test of vital Christianity. And the more these motives are pondered in the conscious presence of God, the more our hearts will dwell in love, and our feet walk in love.

4. There is another aspect of love we should notice in this Scripture -- the quality of God’s love. We have seen that God is love; that He has manifested His love, shown us the highest form or manner of love; and we are further instructed that His love is perfect.

Perfect love casteth out fear {1 John 4:18}.

Perfect love therefore has given a perfect gift; the work, too, He accomplished is perfect -- making perfect peace, and perfecting the believer for ever. The love being perfect, it could do nothing less. Nothing can possibly be added to this love. It is perfect in its quality, perfect in its actings, perfect in its depth and height, perfect in its suitability to us, and perfect in its endurance. It met us in the lowest depth of degradation and sin, and raised us up to the highest place of blessing, even in Him who is Head over all principality and power. It surrounds us on every side with constant care and blessing. All things being of Him who loves us, all things are ours, all things for our sakes, and all things work together for our good. Could love be more perfect? Impossible. Could anything be added to it? Is there a thing we could ask more? Is there a desire that has not been met by Him who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ? What quietness and assurance for ever this gives us! Yea, rather, what praise and thanksgiving engage our hearts while thus dwelling on this boundless circle of divine, perfect love!

It is God’s perfect love that casts out fear; for fear hath torment. We have heard that Luther said “he would run into the arms of the Lord Jesus, even if He had a drawn sword in His hand, because he knew His heart.” And surely the effect of love is always to inspire confidence and banish dread. See how eagerly a little child runs into his mother’s arms; and why? Because he knows his mother’s heart. Hence while on the one hand love always dispels distrust, on the other hand, when fear is in any heart, it is because it has not the sense of

God's infinite, unchanging, perfect love.

He that feareth is not made perfect in love {1 John 4:18}.

What boldness, too, this gives us in the day of judgment! For does the Father love us? Oh, yes, even as He loves His own Son! Is Jesus the Lord near to God? so are we; for we are in Him. Is He alive again, and that for evermore? So have we eternal life in Him. Is He righteous? We, too, are made the righteousness of God in Him. No wonder therefore that it is added,

Because as He is, so are we in this world {1 John 4:17}.

No marvel, then, that we praise and worship the Father now, and adore Him also who has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. The wonder is that our praises ever cease. But we now know something of the reason why when in the glory we shall ever gaze upon that precious Lamb, and sing --

“Thou art worthy.”

Redemption, the New-birth, And Growth

Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Pet. 1:18 to 2:3).

There are two facts put side by side at the close of this first chapter; one spoken of as most frail and fleeting, the other as living and enduring for ever. The former refers to man; the latter to the word of God. As to man, the same testimony is borne by a prophet in olden time, though there specially referring to the nation of Israel, as by an apostle long after. The twice recorded declaration is, that

all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away {1 Pet. 1:24}.

The grass groweth up in the morning and flourisheth; in the evening it is cut down and withereth. The flower attracts the eye, and no sooner charms with interest than it fades away for ever. Such is man -- all men, without exception; for "*all flesh is as grass.*" Man is not only sinful, unclean, and corrupt, but weak, and without continuance; for he passeth away. Rich or poor, high or low, in this there is no difference; he is fragile, and soon decays; and also all he glories in, whether riches, wisdom, or strength, has no continuance; for he no sooner becomes an object of admiration than he passes away. Many will readily admit that they are sinners, who will try to hide from their view both their natural frailty and utter weakness as to the things of God. Still it is blessed to remember that it was for weak and frail ones that Jesus died; for it is written, that

when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6).

But while man so fades, and his glory so rapidly passes away, is it not most blessed to know that God has given us something which endures? It is His own word,

which liveth and abideth for ever {1 Pet. 1:23}.

This gives a solid resting-place for our souls, while conscious of being surrounded with quicksands, and an interminable morass of human opinionism and religiousness. This word we have, blessed be God; and when the created heavens and earth shall have passed away, this word will shine as brightly as ever in all its imperishable clearness and worth. When the saved are in the uninterrupted enjoyment of eternal bliss, and the wicked shut up in everlasting punishment, the word of the Lord will remain the same. The same incorruptible word of truth that

will for ever remind the saints in glory of the grace that brought them there, will also strike deepest terror and remorse in the consciences of the lost, making them feel that they are reaping the deserved fruits of sin and rebellion against God.

It is well, then, to remember that God has spoken, and that we have His word, God's own revelation of His own mind and will, written down for our meditation; for He knows our infirmities and need. It is this word which gives certainty to faith, and assures our hearts of realities. Luke, the beloved physician, informed Theophilus that he wrote the gospel that he might know *the certainty* of those things wherein he had been instructed. The certainty of the word of God is the ground of all stability of soul; for, as Jesus said,

The Scripture cannot be broken {John 10:35};

and again,

Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away {Matt. 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33}.

The Holy Ghost, too, is given to teach us this word, to

guide us into all truth, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God {John 16:13, 1 Cor. 2:12}.

But more about the value and blessedness of the word of the Lord by and by.

There are three points of instruction brought before us in the Scripture we have just read, to which I desire to call attention, and they are of the utmost importance. They are Redemption, the New-birth, and Growth. The two first are fundamental truths, and bring out the two things absolutely necessary in order to be happy in God's presence; for without redemption it is impossible to be brought to God; and without the new-birth it would be impossible to know God, or to enjoy His presence. It is blessed therefore to find them thus put together.

1. REDEMPTION. The apostle reminds the believers whom he addressed (naturally Jews), that they had not been redeemed from their traditional religion with

silver and gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot {1 Pet. 1:18, 19}.

The silver and gold here no doubt refer to the atonement-

money of half-shekel, paid in Israel for every one that was numbered among them from twenty years old and upward. (See Ex. 30:12, &c.) With this ordinance they had been as Jews familiar, and no doubt it stands before us as a remarkable type of the redemption-work of Jesus, inasmuch as this atonement-money was used to make the silver sockets on which all the tabernacle rested, and for hooks on which the curtains were hung. And surely all our hopes are built, and all our confidence hangs, on this only foundation which has been laid for us in the death and blood-shedding of the Son of God. They were here, then, reminded of the cost and reality of their redemption.

The person of the Lord in His infinite perfectness is also presented to us, by the statement that He was

without blemish and spot.

The Jews had to make diligent search for their sacrifices, to find animals which were without a blemish or a spot. Many creatures might be looked over before a spotless one could be found; but such only might be used in the service of the sanctuary; for such only could typify the Holy One of God, who was holy, harmless, and undefiled. Jesus was God's lamb, the only one that ever walked through this world that could be a sacrifice for sin; for all else had sinned, but He knew no sin. Once and again a voice from heaven bore witness to this by saying,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased
{Matt. 3:17, 17:5; 2 Pet. 1:17}.

Even the devils styled Him

the Holy One of God {Mark 1:24, Luke 4:34}.

Wicked Pilate declared again and again before all the people that he found

no fault in Him {John 19:4, 6};

and the self-convicted traitor said he had

betrayed the innocent blood {Matt. 27:4},

The mighty angel Gabriel bore witness to the spotlessness of His person, as born into the world, when he said to Mary,

That *holy thing* which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God {Luke 1:35}.

The thief upon the cross, when expiring by His side, exclaimed,

This man hath done nothing amiss {Luke 23:41}.

Thus all intelligences in heaven and in earth -- angels, men, devils, saints, sinners, Jews, Gentiles -- have borne witness to the fact that He was "without spot or blemish"; while, above all, as we have noticed, the Father's delight was to speak from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This was God's Lamb, holy in nature, harmless, blameless, without rebuke, able therefore to bear the sins of many, and to be a Substitute for those who were dead in trespasses and in sins. It was He who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, who suffered for sins the Just for the unjust to bring us to God. This was God's Lamb, and He finished the work the Father gave Him to do, satisfying every claim of divine justice and righteousness for sin, vindicating all God's ways, and establishing all God's purposes for His honor and

glory. This was

the Lamb who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by Him do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory {see 1 Pet. 1:20, 21}.

How then can I be certain that Jesus died for me? Not by what I *feel*; for our feelings change oftener than the wind. One hour we feel very happy, and another very unhappy. Sometimes our feelings are just as we wish, another time most distressing. My feelings therefore cannot possibly give me certainty as to salvation. Nor can my *works* assure me of my security; for we never do enough to please ourselves, much less to come up to God's standard. Neither does the quality of anything we do satisfy us, to give us comfort as to evidences of Christianity, as people call it; for our best doings are often connected with mixed motives, and humble us deeply before God. Nor can what I *am* make certain to my conscience that Jesus died for me; for our state is never up to our standing, our joy always short of what it should be, and our felt weakness and failure every now and then prostrates us in the dust. How then can I be *certain* that Jesus died for me? We are told here -- He was given

for you, who by Him do believe in God {1 Pet. 1:20, 21}.

This is simple and conclusive. How do I believe in God? Is it from what I see in creation? Most certainly I do, and see His handy work in all. But He has manifested Himself since creation, since man fell, since he dishonored God both without law and under law, in the gift of His only begotten Son for our salvation. This is how I know God now. And such as *by Him* do believe in God that Jesus was the sent One, the Savior, who gave Himself for our sins, shed His blood to cleanse us, whom God raised from the dead, it is *by Him* they believe in God. It is by Him too that we draw near to God. For those surely who thus know God's love to us in Jesus and His death, and know that He has raised Him from the dead and given Him glory, *must* come to God by Him; they *must* praise through Him; they must anticipate glory, the glory of God, on account of Him. Hence such are at peace with God, at home in God's presence, at rest before God; for through Jesus, the sent One and His work, their faith and hope are in God. Can anything, I ask, then be more certain than that Jesus died for me, if I have really thus so believed as to know God, and draw nigh to Him in this only way? Surely such can say,

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us; we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son; we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God {see 1 John 4:16; Rom. 5:10; Rom. 5:1, 2}.

Can you, dear friends, thus assert with heartfelt confidence that Jesus died for you? Is your confidence based, not on what you are, what you feel, or what you have done, but on the accomplished redemption of God's Son? for nothing else could satisfy Him, either as to you or your sins; and, blessed be His name, God's having raised Him from the dead establishes the fact without doubt, that about the sins and persons of all believers He has fully satisfied God; for He glorified Him on the

earth, and finished the work He gave Him to do. By Christ all that believe are justified from all things, and it is God who justifies. How blessed then it is to have our eternal security thus based upon the everlasting efficacy of the work of the Lamb of God, the imperishable stability of the word of God, and the unchanging love and faithfulness of the living and true God, who raised up Jesus from the dead!

“Oh gift of love unspeakable!
Oh gift of mercy, all divine!
We once were slaves of death and hell,
But in Christ’s image we shall shine;
For every gift a song we raise,
But this demands eternal praise.”

2. THE NEW BIRTH. Those who are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ are also born again, and thus have a life and nature suited to enter into and enjoy the things of God. This new nature is strengthened by the Spirit given to indwell us. But while every believer is born again, born from above, born of God, it was on receiving Christ as His Savior.

As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12, 13).

Again, in the third chapter of John’s gospel, where our Lord most emphatically asserts the absolute necessity of Nicodemus being born again, He presents the Son of man lifted up as the alone source of this new life, eternal life, and that too to

whosoever believeth in Him {John 3:15 and 16}.

Here also we are told that it is the Spirit’s work, and by the Word -- born of water (the Word) and of the Spirit -- but that in the way of faith, having the Son of God, who was crucified, as the object of faith. And so in Peter, the Word is the seed, the Spirit the power, and Christ the One by whom we have believed God, Obeying the truth is believing God’s word, the word of the gospel; and therefore, as we have seen, coming unto God by Him. All such are therefore cleansed from sin, born of God, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. The activity of the new nature manifests itself in love to the brethren. We read:

Seeing ye have *purified your souls* in obeying the truth through the *Spirit* unto *unfeigned love of the brethren*. . . . Being *born again*, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. 1:22, 23).

The word of God, which testifies of Christ, received into the heart by the Spirit, in the obedience of faith, making Christ, who was crucified, risen, and glorified, the object of faith, the soul becomes partaker of a new life or nature, and is “born again.”

Now observe here that to be born again is not, as people call it, “a change of heart,” or an alteration of a bad nature into a better one; but a *new birth*, a new creation; made partaker of a new life, a new nature. A believer therefore is a compound of two natures. Hence our Lord said,

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit {John 3:6}.

And in various parts of the apostles’ writings, these two

natures in the believer are recognized. In Galatians we have,

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things which ye would {Gal. 5:17};

or, as it is more correctly rendered,

And these things are opposed one to the other, that ye should not do these things which ye desire.

The believer is never told to crucify the old man; for God has already crucified it with Christ; but he is told, on account of that, to

reckon himself to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ {see Rom. 6:11};

to

put off the old man, and put on the new, &c. {see Col. 3:9, 10}.

And while he is not told to mortify the flesh, because God has already judged it in the cross of His Son, yet he is told to mortify, or put to death, through the Spirit, the actings of the flesh, the deeds of the body, and our members which are upon the earth, uncleanness, lust, &c.; that is, while recognizing the evil nature still in us, we are to put it off, and to deny its actings by the Spirit’s power which dwells in us.

It is impossible for a believer to know himself aright, or to account for what he must know passes within him, unless he is conscious of having these two natures; one of which cannot sin, because it is born of God; while the other can only sin, if allowed to break out, because it is contrary to God. Hence a soul taught of God is admonished to “sin not.” He is also made to know that in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing. The believer cannot truthfully say, “In *me* dwells no good”; for he has a new nature divinely created, and the Holy Ghost also dwells in him; but he can say that

in me, *that is, in my flesh*, no good is {Rom. 7:18}.

Until a believer understands by the teaching of Scripture that he has two principles working in him, antagonistically opposed to each other, he is always more or less doomed to self-occupation, and this only increased by conscientiousness; for, instead of reckoning himself to have been crucified with Christ, and to have thus died unto sin, he reckons himself as living in the world, and still living in a sinful nature, and tries to excuse his evil, or cover it up, or he is at one moment self-gratified, and at another despondent; but all this is reckoning self to be living, and not reckoning self to have died, not consciously alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. This always gives victory; for such are occupied with Christ in the glory as their life and sufficiency, drawing all from Him, having all their resources in Him, and not in self -- in fact, self dead and buried; and now, being the other side of death in a risen and ascended Savior, they live a life of faith upon the Son of God, who loved them and gave Himself for them. As we have observed, the Holy Ghost strengthens the new nature, and the apostle prays that the saints may be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the *inner man*, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, &c. And *the fruit* of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, goodness, meekness, temperance, faith, &c.; but the works of the flesh are black and loathsome

indeed. Hence we are admonished to walk in the Spirit, that we may not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Thus we see how fully Scripture recognizes these two natures.

And is it really certain, then, that I was born of God on believing? Most unquestionably; for it is written,

whosoever *believeth that Jesus is the Christ* is born of God (1 John 5:1).

The word of the truth of the gospel concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, brought to me by the Holy Ghost, led me to look to Jesus the object of faith as my Savior, and thereby to receive life. The effect of being born again is that I *love*. I love Him who first loved me, and I love the brethren;

for he that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him {see 1 John 5:1}.

How blessedly simple and true this is! and what assurance it gives me that I am in Christ and Christ in me!

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name {Psa. 103:1}.

3. GROWTH. The third link in this precious chain of divine truth is *growth*. For Scripture speaks of the inner man being strengthened, of our growing up into Christ, sanctified, or practically separated unto God by the truth, growing in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Thus the soul makes progress. But two things here are taught us as being necessary in order to grow. One is, that the activities of evil, which we all have in the old man, the flesh, must be unsparingly denied. To walk and act carnally is to produce the opposite to growth; hence in this same chapter we are exhorted to

abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul {1 Pet. 2:11}.

And what Christian is there that has not found this out by bitter experience? Who of God's children does not know that when he has given way to the desires of the flesh and of the mind, that it has chilled his fervor, damped his energies, and checked his comfort? But, you may say, Is it possible that I, who am born of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, that I can be the subject of such foul activities as here recorded? Indeed, dear fellow-Christian, it is so, What! Can malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, and evil-speakings be perpetrated by a child of God? Yes; and it is children of God, those who are born of God, that he addresses, and insists on their laying aside *all* these fleshly activities,

all malice, *all* guile, *all* evil-speaking {1 Pet. 2:1}.

Those who see that God has judged both the nature and the fruits of the old man on the cross, and given them a new life, a new nature in Christ risen and ascended, will understand this, and find power from it. But if our souls would make progress in divine things, there must be this absolute, unsparing setting aside of all these fleshly buddings. Yes, "*all*"; for they are like worthless weeds, which grow up and check the growth of what is really good.

With all this being laid aside, the new life, like a new-born babe, wants nourishment and strength, and for this nothing less than the pure, unadulterated milk of the word will suffice.

Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live {see Matt. 4:4}.

It is then by receiving with meekness the engrafted word that we grow. And as a new-born babe often turns to its source of nutriment, and takes in little by little as it can digest it, so we are exhorted,

as new-born babes, to earnestly desire the pure milk of the word, that we may grow thereby {see 1 Pet. 2:2}.

In this way the mind of God, the love of God, the wisdom of God, and the ways of God, are made known to us more and more, And when the Scriptures which testify of Christ are neglected, how can there be spiritual growth? Does it not plainly show us why some Christians make so little advance in divine things? and why they have so little joy and gladness in the Lord?

We must not forget that though born of God, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. But we need the power of the Holy Ghost to instruct us in the true knowledge of God's mind, to guide us into all truth; and, blessed be God, this is one of His gracious offices. What another ground for praise and thanksgiving is this!

May we then, Christian brethren, always remember that the true secret of growth is laying aside what is evil in God's sight, and constantly and eagerly drinking in what His own grace has so richly given us in His own word of eternal truth. Without these exercises of soul, how is it possible that we, though redeemed and born of God, can be healthy or happy?

Our Lord's Care For Us During His Absence

John 14:1-20

We must bear in mind, when approaching this fourteenth chapter of John, that it forms part of a most blessed, and, I may say, unique portion of divine truth. It, with the two following chapters, gives us the Lord's farewell address to His disciples before He left the world to go to the Father; and the seventeenth chapter gives us His commendatory prayer to the Father for them. The time it was uttered is very significant; for it was after the supper, and, as we know from Matthew's gospel, after He had formally taken His leave of Jerusalem and her children, when He said,

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; and ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord {see Matt. 23:38, 39}.

With the cross immediately before Him, the state of the Jewish nation settled by their rejection of Him, Judas having gone out, and the Lord alone with His eleven true ones, whom He was about to leave in the world without His personal care and ministry, He opens up His heart's deep love for them in sweetest, tenderest care. It was, too, the fitting opportunity for Him to announce some of the great principles of Christianity, and to mark out the path of true blessing for all His loved ones, who would have to pass through this present scene during His absence on high.

He is alone then with the eleven; they are objects at this moment of His intensest interest and care; and confining our thoughts for the present to the verses which we have just read, we may observe among other lines of precious instruction three leading points of the utmost importance. I refer, firstly, to the frequent and varied use of the word "believe" in the first twelve verses; secondly, to the gift of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter; and, thirdly, to the blessed and cheering hope of our Lord's coming again.

Before, however, looking at these points, it may be well to notice that here only in Scripture have we the Father's house set forth. The reason no doubt for its introduction was the fact that Jesus had not long before declared, that the beautiful temple, which the disciples had so long been accustomed to venerate, would soon be reduced to a heap of ruins, a thorough scene of desolation. Jesus said,

There shall not be left one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down {see Mark 13:2, Luke 21:6}.

Their hearts, therefore, being made sad with this humiliating announcement, they are comforted by being assured there is another house incorruptible and imperishable, the dwelling-place of perfect, changeless love -- the Father's house. If He left them and went to the Father's house, it was large enough for them also, having many mansions or abodes, and He would go and prepare a place for them, and then come and receive them to Himself. For as they had always been with Him on

earth, so they should be with Him in glory;
that where I am, there ye may be also.

Jesus said,

In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, &c. {John 14:2-4}.

Thus their hope being gone of enjoyment and blessing in connection with their beautiful temple on earth, another far more attractive and desirable house is presented to them for their eternal abode, where He was going to prepare a place for them.

Observe, too, here, that the blessed Lord spoke when on this side of the cross, saying,

I go to prepare a place for you {John 14:2}.

And, blessed be His name, He did go, though the only way to the Father's house was by the death of the cross. We are sure that love, divine, perfect love to us, led Him thus. And we know that by that one sacrifice He has prepared us for the Father's house; for

by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified {Heb. 10:14};

and when He rose from the dead, and entered into heaven itself by His own blood, He prepared the place for us. Thus the Father's house is our assured destiny, made sure by Him who is our Forerunner, our Righteousness, and now seated on the Father's throne.

As I have said, among many deeply-precious lessons which this portion teaches us, there are three points which especially demand our attention.

1. Our Lord's earnest desire, that during this period of His absence from us, we should be in the habit of looking to Him about everything, and to expect all we need from Him. He was going to the Father. Though away from us as to personal presence, there would be no change in His love or His care. Nor would His power be less; for He was going to the position of all power in heaven and in earth. He therefore first of all makes a particular request before leaving them; it was this, that they would exercise faith in Him, and not allow their hearts to be troubled. How exquisitely tender this is! What loving concern and interest it manifests! Did the precious Savior say, You will not have trouble? No. Quite the contrary. He said,

In the world ye shall have tribulation {John 16:33};

but twice in this chapter He entreats us not to let our *hearts* be troubled. How is it possible that my heart should not be troubled, some may say? Jesus supplies the answer. As Jews they had known what it was to believe in God, to trust God;

but now they were also to trust Him, exercise faith in Him.

Believe also in me {John 14:1}.

How simple and efficacious is this preventative of heart-trouble! Do we know its blessedness, beloved, in our own soul experiences? Do we so cast all our care upon Him, who careth for us, as to keep our troubles as it were at arms' length, so as not to get under them? How sweet and salutary is this counsel! This trust in Him is something more than believing on the Lord Jesus for salvation; for it is because we are His own, and objects of His everlasting love and care, that we are enjoined to roll every burden upon His Almighty arm, and leave it there. "Believe *also* in me." How blessed, then, the thought, that the Lord Jesus, though now in glory, far above all principality and power, desires that in this present trying scene our eyes may be looking to Him, and casting every trouble into His arms of love, so that our poor hearts may be free to love and serve Him, and not be oppressed by grief; but instead of this, as we afterwards read, that His peace in all its calm unruffled sweetness may be ours. I repeat, how loving is our Lord's counsel, and how marvelous His care for our present comfort and blessing in Himself!

In this address, Jesus evidently contemplated this present time -- the interval between His going to the Father and His coming again to receive us unto Himself. It is not the assembly, or the Church, as it is called, which He reveals; for the time was not come for the mystery of the assembly, which is His body, to be brought out. This was reserved, as we know, for a later period (Eph. 3:5). But in this address we do find great principles of truth enunciated, which we may call special doctrines of Christianity. And it is remarkable that the Lord seems to have anticipated the fact, that one of the prominent contentions during His absence would be concerning the glory and divinity of His person. He not only therefore expressed His desire, that, during His being at the right hand of God, we should look to Him in faith concerning trouble, but He teaches us also that the true divinity and glory of His person could be known only in the way of faith. This is extremely important to observe. When therefore Philip said,

Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? {John 14:8, 9}.

Here the Lord expressly teaches His essential Godhead as one with the Father. No doubt distinct as to personality, as He elsewhere shows, when He says,

My Father is greater than I (John 14:28).

But the point insisted on is, that He is one in essence and eternal Godhead with the Father. The Father dwelling in Him, and doing the works, and He so manifesting the Father that He could say,

He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.

Every one knows what a vital and frequent subject of controversy the personal glory of Jesus has been during His absence; and the striking point to my mind here is, that His person is a revelation, not to be proved by argumentative

reasoning, but to be received in faith, according to God's own statement concerning Him. Hence Jesus says again on this point, "Believe! Believe!"

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? . . . *Believe me* that I am in the Father, and the Father in me (John 14:10, 11).

The personal glory therefore of the Son as one in essential Godhead with the Father, and dwelling among men in flesh, a perfect man, speaking only the words the Father gave Him to speak, and doing works, in perfect obedience, by the Father dwelling in Him, is a matter only for faith, and not for human reasoning, much less for carnal speculation. How gracious then the tender pity and consideration of our loving Lord thus to arm us against the seductions of Satan, and cunning craftiness of men, and to furnish us effectually with the mighty weapon comprehended in that sweet word, "Believe!" "Believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me." And truly the expression of our hearts in the contemplation of Him is --

"In Thee most perfectly expressed
The Father's self doth shine;
Fulness of Godhead too -- the Blest --
Eternally Divine.
The higher mysteries of Thy fame
The creature's grasp transcend:
The Father only Thy blest name
Of Son can comprehend.
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow."

But there is another subject for faith during our Lord's absence especially pointed out by Him. It is concerning *service*; for He knew how our hearts would delight to serve Him here, after He had gone to the Father. He therefore counsels us to exercise faith in Himself as to service, and informs us that the secret of success is *believing* on Him. The deep importance of this instruction is seen in the double "verily" which introduces it; for it is like pledging Himself to the certainty of the fulfilment.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that *believeth* on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father (John 14:12).

Nothing can possibly express more strikingly the need of exercising faith in the Lord Jesus in regard to working for Him, or the true secret of success. As to the result, no doubt that Peter's service on the day of Pentecost was numerically greater than anything on record of the Lord's service; but when we think that since the Lord went away, and the Holy Ghost came, a soul brought to the Lord Jesus now is united to Him by the Holy Ghost, and made a

member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30},

the quality, in this sense, of the service now is greater than in the ministry of Christ Himself. How good then of the Lord, before He went away, thus to encourage our hearts in Himself! and how clearly His warm desire is expressed that during this little while of His being seated on the right hand of God, and of our being left in the world, we should be in constant, personal intercourse with Himself! So that whether we are in

circumstances of trial, or thinking of His own blessed person, or engaged in His holy service, in each particular our souls may realize and enjoy the blessedness of exercising faith in Him, whom having not seen we love. It is not astonishing therefore to find prayer immediately coupled with these instructions concerning faith; for though faith and prayer are not the same things, yet it seems impossible that we can live and walk by faith long without being led to pour out our hearts in prayer; for faith is always dependent. We read also of

the prayer of faith {James 5:15}.

But here the allusion to prayer seems peculiarly blessed, because it shows the all-prevalent value of the name of the Lord Jesus in prayer, and warrants our largest expectations in asking *in His name*.

Whatsoever ye shall ask *in my name*, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask *anything* in my name, I will do it (John 14:13, 14).

Further on in this discourse our Lord says,

Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father *in my name*, He will give it you {John 16:23}.

Prior to this, they had asked nothing in His name; now He was about to leave them He assures them of large answers to prayer in thus asking *in His name*. Oh the untold blessedness of those who thus take the Lord at His word, and, while deeply conscious of His absence, know the sweet reality of thus having to do with Him!

2. There was another precious consolation for them during the absence of their precious Lord, who had always sought to preserve and comfort them; He would send the Holy Ghost, another Comforter.

I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever: the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:16, 17).

Here we have one of the most important truths of Christianity -- the gift and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Though private and personal in His operations on the soul, yet not the less real and effectual on that account. He was then dwelling *with* them, but He would be *in* them, and take up His abode with them for ever. The Holy Ghost had always been acting in divine operations. In creation the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; and when things were to be made in connection with the tabernacle service according to the pattern of heavenly things, and pre-eminently typical of the personal glory and work of the Lord Jesus, it was by the Holy Ghost that Bezaleel was endued with wisdom to make them. It was by the Holy Ghost coming upon and moving prophets that they foretold according to God's mind, and gave needed instruction and testimony to the people. Even Jesus Himself was full of the Holy Ghost, and is spoken of as anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. And now if Jesus went away, the Holy Ghost who had been *with* them should be *in* them. Elsewhere Jesus said to His disciples,

It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you {John 16:7}.

And, prior to this, we are told that the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that

Jesus was not yet glorified {John 7:39}.

Thus we see plainly that the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, would not come and indwell them unless Jesus went away and was glorified. Now, why was this? The answer is clear. Unless Jesus had gone to the cross, and accomplished redemption, we could not have been cleansed, and therefore suited for the abode of the Spirit; but when Jesus had by His one offering purged our sins, justified and perfected us for ever, and had risen triumphantly from the dead, as having conquered Satan, death, and the grave, and gone into heaven with His own blood -- then, and not till then, could the Holy Ghost find cleansed vessels to take up His abode in. And this clearly explains why the Holy Ghost did not indwell His people as the Comforter before. And if a prophet was only moved now and then to speak by the Holy Ghost, no wonder that David prayed,

Take not thy Holy Spirit from me {Psa. 51:11}.

And if, as is most true, the Holy Ghost *now* dwells in us for ever, in virtue of our being cleansed and justified by the blood of Jesus, it is equally intelligible why an apostle said,

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye *are sealed* unto the day of redemption {Eph. 4:30}.

This distinctive truth of the Holy Ghost's indwelling cleansed ones has been carefully pointed to in the typical instruction of the anointing of Aaron and his sons. If you turn to the eighth chapter of Leviticus, you will see that Aaron (type of Christ) was anointed with oil (type of the Holy Ghost) without being previously sprinkled with blood (Lev. 8:12), thus blessedly showing us that the Holy Ghost would come down and abide on Jesus, because of His intrinsic personal holiness, for He had nothing to be cleansed. Being declared by the testimony of heaven to be the beloved Son in whom the Father was well pleased,

the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him (Luke 3:22).

But Aaron's sons, the priests, typical of those now who are washed from their sins in His own blood, and made kings and priests unto God and His Father, were not anointed until after they had been sprinkled with blood. (See Lev. 8:23-30.) Aaron was afterwards sprinkled with blood, of course, because he was a man of like passions with us, and no one was fit to approach God, or to serve Him without it; an important fact that has been most lamentably lost sight of. The point, however, for our present purpose to notice is, that the Holy Ghost came upon Jesus because of His perfect holiness, and that He indwells us because we are cleansed by His blood, and sons of God by the new birth.

Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father {see Gal. 4:6}.

Other Scriptures show the personality, Godhead, and operations of the Holy Ghost thus indwelling us, which the limits of this address forbid our entering upon now. There is, however, a point or two that could not be passed over. We are told that the world which rejected Jesus will also reject the

Holy Ghost,

whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not,
neither knoweth Him {John 14:7}.

We must not expect, therefore, the unconverted to know anything of the Holy Ghost; and certainly nothing can be more plainly demonstrated by the world's religiousness than the entire want of the real recognition of the Holy Ghost, even if He be mentioned by name. But this ignorance was not to characterize believers; on the contrary, it is said of them,

Ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you {John 14:17}.

And again in verse 20, referring to the day when the Spirit would be given,

At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you {John 14:20}.

So that when the Holy Ghost came, we should know, as a matter of spiritual intelligence, that Christ is in us, and that we are in Christ.

It is clearly stated here that believers know the Holy Ghost as dwelling in them. We know certainly that it was by the Holy Ghost working in us that we first had to do with Christ as our Savior; for the natural man neither receives nor knows the things of the Spirit of God. We know Him also as indwelling us, not only because we would not dishonor Jesus, but because from our inmost soul we look up and own Him as our Lord; for

no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost {1 Cor. 12:3}.

Again, we know Him as testifying of Christ to our souls, and often comforting us when cast down by taking of Christ's person, work, words, perfections, fulness, offices, or ways, and showing unto us. It is because of the Spirit of God dwelling in us, who is the Spirit of adoption, that we know God to be our Father -- approach Him as such with filial feelings, and have access unto Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. The believer is to know then that the Holy Ghost dwells in him; and he realizes that the truth is not only intelligently known by him or written in his mind, but that he has a feeling sense of the truth on account of its being written on his heart. Is it not most blessed, then, to think of the Holy Ghost as given to be in us, and to abide with us during our Lord's absence?

3. I have already touched a little on the hope; that is, in this address the blessed Lord gave them nothing to look forward to in the way of progress on earth; but, on the contrary, He set His coming again for them, to take them out of the world to the Father's house, as the true expectation of their hearts.

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3}.

Himself coming again for them, that they might be with Him where He is, was the glorious prospect He gave them. And most glorious it is; for nothing short of this, and nothing but this, could satisfy their hearts. This was not, however, a characteristic of Judaism; for Israel being an earthly people, called with an earthly calling, they were encouraged with expectations of blessing on the earth; whereas Christianity, connected as it is with Christ as rejected by the world, and

welcomed to the right hand of God in glory, the Holy Ghost is sent down, not to establish a religious system and people in the world, but to connect believers with Christ in heaven; and so rescuing them from this present evil world, that they are not of it, even as He was not of the world. We, therefore, serve Christ in it, as those who expect Him to come from heaven at any time to take us bodily out of it, and so be for ever with the Lord. We are not then to marvel if the world hate us, or think it strange if our path be one of suffering and reproach for the precious name of the Lord Jesus. But having Him who is now in heaven, in His exercise of living ministry and constant care over us, to look to and trust, the Holy Ghost down here in us to comfort us, and the hope of our Lord's coming for us, we are to show forth our love to Him by keeping His word.

“Though our pilgrimage be dreary,
This is not our resting-place;
Shall we of the way be weary
When we see our Master's face?
No; e'en now anticipating,
In this hope our souls rejoice;
And His promised advent waiting,
Soon shall hear His welcome voice.”

Seven Present Blessings Through the Death of Christ

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said He, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water (Heb. 10:1-22).

When we think of the infinite and eternal glory of the Son of God -- the Word made flesh, who dwelt among us -- we can easily perceive that nothing less than manifold and everlasting results must be connected with His atoning work upon the cross. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that not only did He by Himself purge our sins, but accomplished by His one offering all that was needed to give us title to stand before God in perpetual acceptance and righteousness, as objects of His changeless favor and blessing. Redemption being now, therefore, an accomplished fact, and the Holy Ghost having come down, every believer is not only secure and for ever blessed, but he is also entitled to know it, and to rejoice in the Lord always.

From the first, there was a tendency to slip away from the true and present value of the sacrifice of Christ, thus undermining the glory of the cross, and drawing souls away from the sense of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free; in other words, to turn to one form or other of Jewish ritualism and legality, by forgetting the true worth of that one sacrifice which was once offered, both in regard to what it has really delivered us from, as well as where it now puts us.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, the glory of the *person* of the Son of God, as necessarily giving everlasting efficacy to His atoning work, is sweetly set forth; and in the portion now before us we find clustered together a sevenfold character of present blessing, which we are entitled to know as resulting from that one offering. But, before considering them, it may be well to take a glance at some of the contrasts here set forth. Under the law, we observe that the sacrifices were *many* and various, in contrast with Christ's *one* sacrifice. There was also a yearly *remembrance of sins*, because the blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sins; whereas by the offering of Christ we have *remission of sins*, *no more to be remembered*.

Again, the blood of the many sacrifices and ashes of an heifer gave only a ceremonial cleansing to the *purifying of the flesh*; but the blood of Christ *purges the conscience*. Mark also that the many sacrifices, according to the Jewish and only scriptural ritual, *could not make the comers thereunto perfect*; the precious value, however, of Christ's one offering is so efficacious that it needs no repetition, because *it sanctifies and perfects for ever*. Further, the Jewish high priest was *always standing*; he could never sit down, because of the continual repetition of sacrifices; his work was never done; but Jesus, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins, *for ever sat down*, or sat down in perpetuity, on the right hand of God. And, lastly, let us not fail to notice, that, with all the Jewish ritual of priests and sacrifices, *the veil was yet standing*, so that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest; whereas when Jesus said,

It is finished {John 19:30},

and bowed His sacred head in death upon the tree, in virtue of that one sacrifice for sins,

the veil of the temple was *rent in twain* from the top to the bottom {Matt. 27:51, Mark 15:38}.

Thus God showed that His estimate of that accomplished work was such that He could now come down to man in freest love and with richest blessings, and that through the rent veil -- that is to say, His flesh -- the believer has now access with confidence into God's most holy presence. Precious privilege for our present and everlasting enjoyment! Well may our hearts look up and adoringly exclaim, "What love!"

"Tis finished! -- here our souls have rest;
His work can never fail:
By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,
We pass within the veil.

“Within the holiest of all,
Cleansed by His precious blood,
Before the throne we prostrate fall,
And worship Thee, O God.”

1. In now turning to this sevenfold cluster of present blessings, we may first look at what Scripture teaches about *remission of sins*. The reality of this, as a matter of present knowledge and enjoyment, few believe and many deny. But, spite of all men's infidel reasonings, ritualistic observances, and the bold way in which many ridicule the idea, yet nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture, or more truly enjoyed by souls. Our Lord Himself said,

This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the *remission of sins* {Matt. 26:28};

and observe, this is not a promise that they shall be blotted out when we come to die, but complete cleansing *now*, in virtue of Christ's having suffered for sins, and therefore washed us from them in His most precious blood. The prophets of the Old Testament also taught that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul {Lev. 17:11}.

Hezekiah said,

Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back (Isa. 38:17).

Micah said,

Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19).

Isaiah, speaking for God, no doubt looking forward to Christ's sacrifice, said,

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins (Isa. 44:22).

No language could perhaps be used more forcibly to illustrate the complete cancelling of our sins; for where, I ask, is the thick cloud we were looking at yesterday? You will reply, “It is gone, and gone for ever.” True, and so completely are our sins now blotted out by God; for He says He will remember them no more.

Our Lord also preached the precious doctrine of present forgiveness of sins; to be known too, not on a death-bed merely, but now, to-day. Did He not say to a palsied man,

Be of good cheer; thy sins ARE forgiven thee {see Matt. 9:2}?

And did He not so insist upon it, that the people might know that the Son of man hath *power on earth to forgive sins*? Did not the blessed Lord also pronounce present forgiveness of sins to another who was broken-hearted and distressed about her sins, and had fallen at His feet behind Him for relief? Were not His sweet, soul-comforting words to this sin-stricken soul,

Thy sins ARE forgiven (Luke 7:48)?

not shall be when you come to die, but *are* forgiven. No further proof surely can be required by any right mind, that there is such a blessing to be known as the present enjoyment of God having given the believer remission of sins. In fact, the gospel is preached to make this known. It is God's present proclamation.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that

through this man (the Lord Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness (or remission) of sins (Acts 13:38);

so that to deny the present knowledge and enjoyment of sins blotted out is to deny the true character of the gospel of the grace of God.

But some may say, “I see that God does now remit sins, and it is clear that He does so in virtue of the sacrifice and blood-shedding of Jesus; for it is written,

Without the shedding of blood is no remission {see Heb. 9:22};

but I want to be sure that my sins are remitted, that I am washed from my sins in His blood. Is it possible that I can be certain about this? and if so, how?” Nothing can be more positively declared than that your sins are remitted the moment you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; and you will have the certain assurance of it too when you simply look to Him, and rely on what God says. Your sins are forgiven by virtue of Christ's work, and only in the way of faith. The Israelite put his hand upon the sacrifice, thus identifying himself with it; and when it was killed, and the blood sprinkled, he was pronounced forgiven; so now, all those who simply avail themselves before God of the sacrifice of Christ for the atonement of their sins have at once remission of sins; and that not because of their feelings, or religion, or works of any kind, but through the blood of Christ.

I write unto you, little children, because your sins ARE forgiven you *for His name's sake* (1 John 2:12).

Again, you will see what God says about it in Acts 10:43. There you read those precious words:

To Him (Christ) give all the prophets witness, that *through His name* whosoever *believeth* in Him shall receive *remission of sins*.

Receive these words from the mouth of God, and you will doubt no more that all your sins are blotted out by Him. Thus, with many others, you will be able to say --

“Sins against a holy God;
Sins against His righteous laws;
Sins against His love, His blood;
Sins against His name and cause;
Sins immense as is the sea --
From them all He cleanseth me.”

Nothing can possibly be more conclusive from His unalterable word of truth, than that God now proclaims by the gospel remission of sins, and gives remission of sins to whosoever believes on the Lord Jesus Christ; and that so thoroughly and for ever are our sins thus blotted out, that God further declares,

Their sins and iniquities *will I remember no more* {Heb. 10:17}.

Blessed reality, and sure resting-place for sin-stricken souls! But whether every believer has the comfort of it or not, it is unquestionable that he has remission of sins; for God is faithful to His own word. He cannot deny Himself

2. In the next place, let us notice the remarkable words in this chapter,

No more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2}.

By conscience we understand, God knows and I know. If you owed a man a thousand pounds, every time you met him you would be troubled, because you knew that you were in his debt, and that he knew it too. Suppose a friend went to him and paid him, and you did not know it, then, though your debt were paid, yet because you did not know it, you would still blush when you met your creditor. But if the creditor called upon you, told you he had been paid, and bade you read the receipt in full of all demands, then would you not be at once reconciled to him, and be in such perfect peace about your debt that, however frequently you met him, your conscience would no more be troubled? You would have *a purged conscience*, because you knew and he knew the debt had been justly discharged. So is it with regard to God and your sins. Though Jesus had borne your sins, suffered for your sins, died for your sins, shed His precious blood for the remission of your sins, and though God gave you remission, when first you drew nigh to Him, through Jesus and His blood, yet till you knew that God was satisfied, that He pronounced you cleansed, your conscience would not be purged, you would still feel burdened, and have dread of God. When you were quite sure *from God's word* that through the blood of Christ you were cleansed, that He justifies you, and will no more remember your transgressions and lawlessness, your *conscience would be purged*, you would have *no more conscience of sins*. Conscious of disobedience you may be after this, which will call forth the confession of your sins to the Father as His child, in order to your communion being restored; but there would be no more question of sin as to condemnation. You will then seek so to walk as to keep a conscience void of offence, both toward God and toward man. The Scripture which cannot be broken, setting before you as it does God's mind, and brought home to your heart by the Holy Spirit, you will be kept in perfect peace. Self-occupation, or brooding over circumstances, will disturb this; but looking off again to God and His word, you will realize that you are an object of divine favor and blessing.

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee {Isa. 26:3}.

3. The believer is also *sanctified*, and this through the one offering of Christ according to the will of God.

By the which will we *are* sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10).

This is another *present* blessing. We are not told here that we *shall* be sanctified, but that "we *are* sanctified." Many believers, because they have not searched the Scriptures on the subject, have very erroneous thoughts about sanctification. Not a few who would say they are *justified*, would greatly hesitate to say they are *sanctified*. Why is this? Because they hold the false notion that to be sanctified means to be holy in nature, and not finding this the case, they are always hoping to be, and never can say they *are* sanctified. But sanctification is not to be so understood. The vessels of the sanctuary were sanctified; but did the gold of those vessels differ from ordinary corruptible gold? Certainly not. But they were set apart for God according to His will, by being sprinkled with blood and anointed with oil, and thus became vessels for His service, If sanctification is thus looked at, it becomes simple enough. It is

most certainly God's truth that every believer is sanctified, or set apart for Him; but how could this be except through the atoning work of Christ? And if we are sprinkled with His blood, how could we but thus be set apart for God? The Jewish priests were sprinkled with blood in order to be set apart for their priestly functions; and we are also told

Wherefore Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate {Heb. 13:12}.

Nothing can be more conclusive than that every believer is sanctified, or set apart for God, by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

It may be well to remark here, that there are five aspects of sanctification in the New Testament.

(1) Sanctification of the Father, setting us apart according to His gracious will or purpose (Jude 1).

(2) Sanctification by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 13:12).

(3) Sanctification of the Spirit, one of the actions of the Spirit in our souls (1 Pet. 1:2). Thus the Father's purpose, the Son's blood, and the Spirit's work, all combine to set us apart for God. We are sanctified by the will of God.

(4) But what, it may be asked, is the measure, or character of this sanctification? Where does it bring us in thus being set apart for God? The answer is, that Christ at God's right hand in heaven is the character of our sanctification; for we

are sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Cor. 1:2).

And we are further told that God hath *made Him* to be *unto us sanctification* (1 Cor. 1:30). We are thus as near to God as Christ is; for we are set apart for God *in Him*. Blessed rest for our souls!

(5) We find also in Scripture *practical sanctification*, the effect of divine truth upon our souls. Jesus prayed,

Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth (John 17:17).

There is growth in this, no doubt, just as the word is received into our hearts as divine truth; but progressive sanctification, or persons getting more and more holy in their nature, is not true; for

that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit {John 3:6};

and we know that the flesh, though it may be kept under, cannot be made fit for God, or for His service.

The flesh profiteth nothing {John 6:63}.

How blessed, then, is this third result of the death of Christ, in thus setting us apart for God according to His will.

By the which will we *are* sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all {Heb. 10:10}.

And, as we have traced from Scripture, the Father's purpose, the Son's blood, and the Spirit's operation, have all acted in this, it is *in Christ* who is at God's right hand that we are sanctified, and by the power of divine truth in our hearts that we are practically led forth into His holy ways. Oh for the continual sense in our souls that we are thus divinely set apart for God!

4. But those who are thus sanctified are also
perfected for ever.

A wondrous fact indeed, but most surely true, and all through the sacrifice of Christ;

for by one offering He *hath* perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14).

It is into this permanent character of blessing we are now brought; Christ has sat down, and we are for ever perfected. Wondrous grace! The work is done. The effect is perpetual. God is glorified. It needs nothing to be added. The work is finished, so Christ has sat down. The perfect love of God provided the perfect and spotless victim for the sacrifice; the work has been effectually done, and eternal redemption accomplished, so that we are for ever blessed. What matchless grace! In virtue therefore of this infinitely efficacious offering, He will present us without spot and faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. When the soul receives this truth as from the mouth of God, he not only rejoices in the Lord, but, finding himself freed from all questions as to his own eternal blessing and security, he has leisure to serve the Lord in helping others.

Thus far in the portion we are considering have we seen, that by the one sacrifice which was once offered we have remission of sins, a purged conscience, and are also sanctified and perfected for ever. We do well to ponder these most blessed truths, and to charge our hearts not to lose the full blessing of joy and strength they are so calculated to impart.

5. To all this work of Christ *the Holy Spirit bears witness*. Until redemption had been accomplished, the Holy Ghost could not come down to indwell us. No doubt the Holy Ghost had acted on and wrought by holy men all through at various times; but before the vessel had been actually cleansed by the blood of Jesus, He could not take up His abode in us, But having been born of the Spirit, and cleansed from our sins, He is now given to us.

Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son in our hearts, crying, Abba, Father {Gal. 4:6}.

Now, what is so important to observe here is, that the Holy Spirit witnesses *to us* of the everlasting blessings we are brought into by the one offering of Christ. For immediately after being told that we are both sanctified and perfected for ever, we read,

Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a *witness to us* {Heb. 10:15}.

The witness of the Spirit, then, is that we *are* purged worshippers, sanctified and perfected for ever. He also writes God's laws in our hearts and understandings, so that we may know and enjoy these most precious truths; and comforts us with the assurance that our sins and iniquities God will remember no more (Heb. 10:15-17). In virtue, then, of the cleansing, sanctifying power of the blood of Jesus, the Holy Ghost has come down to dwell in our hearts, so that we may be assured that we are perfected for ever by that one offering, enjoy the truth, understand the will of the Lord, and be kept in perfect peace.

6. *The priesthood of Christ* is also based on the perfection of

the work of the cross. We are told that Christ has entered in once into the holy place *by His own blood*, having accomplished eternal redemption (Heb. 9:12); and in the Scripture before us we also find that

He sat down on the right hand of God . . . *for* by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:12-14).

Thus Jesus, the true Aaron, was able to go into God's most holy presence, *not* with the blood of bulls and of calves, but by *His own blood*, because of its all-cleansing and perfecting efficacy. Having thus made us nigh to God in perpetuity of blessing, so that no further offering is needed, *He sat down*. He is therefore a sitting priest. Aaron could never sit down, because of the many sacrifices he was called on to offer.

But this man (Jesus), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God {Heb. 10:12}.

Thus the present priesthood of the Lord is established on that which has perfected us for ever. Jesus is therefore meeting our present need by sustaining, succoring, interceding for us, and ministering to us, because we are cleansed, sanctified, and perfected for ever by His one offering.

7. Thus have we *boldness also to enter into the holiest of all*. As before observed, we have not to do with a standing veil, but a rent veil. When Jesus died upon the cross, we are told that

the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom {Matt. 27:51, Mark 15:38}.

In this way God showed that He could now, because of the one sacrifice of Christ, openly pronounce that every barrier to our entrance into His presence was entirely removed. Thus

the new and living way was consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh {see Heb. 10:20}.

We therefore now by faith draw near. We enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, where the great High Priest is. The new and living way is always open. Our place is to be inside. There the believer is always welcome.

Come boldly {Heb. 4:16},

says God.

Let us draw near {Heb. 10:22},

says an inspired apostle. What grace! What a precious privilege to be able at all times to draw near! What love! What nearness, too, to be thus set before God on the true ground of worship as purged worshippers! The precious blood of Christ is surely our never-failing title to be there, and there He ever lives as our subsisting righteousness; for we are made the righteousness of God in Him. What peace and rest the accomplished work of Christ gives us, even in the holiest of all! And how we feel our souls drawn there by the perfection and activities of our great High Priest, by the rent veil, and the sprinkled blood! This is surely something more than the modern evangelical doctrine, which insists on our being "always at the foot of the cross." Blessed, most blessed, it surely is to look back and remember Jesus in all His love and sorrow there. But that soul whose thoughts rise no higher than Jesus on the cross, though safe for eternity, knows neither the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, nor, however

retiring and secluded in his habits, what it is to be rescued from this present evil world, nor to be delivered from self! But when he believes that the precious Person who died for him on the cross is now in the glory, and that His blood now speaks for him in God's most holy presence, he rejoices in the fact that the death and blood-shedding of the Son of God give him title to be in heaven itself -- now by faith and in spirit, and bodily when Jesus comes. Talk to him about being "always at the foot of the cross," and he will point to the rent veil, to the ever-living High Priest inside, to the blood which speaks there, and declare that his unspeakable privilege now is to be inside the veil. It is there we see the One who died for us now. He was on the cross; He was in the sepulcher; but it is there we contemplate Him now, and crowned with glory and honor. There we know His precious priestly functions are always active for us. There we learn the true value of His most precious blood, not only in giving remission of sins, but as our never-failing title to be in the presence of God in perfect peace for ever. Those who insist on being "always at the foot of the

cross" may have peace; but how can they know communion and worship according to God's mind?

Do our souls then, beloved fellow-Christians, truly rejoice in the Lord? Do we know what it is really to be inside the veil as purged worshipers? There is no effort in this. We shall not be trying to get there, because we know we are there, in Him who is true. Entering into this precious fact, and beholding the blessed One who is there, knowing also the welcome to come boldly and at all times, we take the place which wondrous grace has accorded to us, and bow our hearts in adoring gratitude and worship. Then we delight to sing,

"Thy precious name it is I bear,
In Thee I am to God brought near,
And all the Father's love I share,
O Lamb of God, in Thee.

"And when I in Thy likeness shine,
The glory and the praise be Thine,
That everlasting joy is mine,
O Lamb of God, in Thee."

(The four articles below on *Priesthood* were also printed as a separate pamphlet called *The Cross and the Throne; or, Sacrifice and Priesthood* (London: Broom, n.d.). The additional, prefatory article in that paper was called *Sacrifice* and is essentially the article just above and so is omitted here.

Priesthood No. 1

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession (Heb. 4:14).

In a day like this, when the authority of Scripture is either questioned or not listened to, and error abounds on almost every hand, it is impossible that believers can overrate the value of acquaintance with the truth of God's present order of priesthood. Like many other parts of divine teaching, it has been greatly lost sight of, because a false order of things has usurped its place. But the knowledge and enjoyment of priesthood according to God greatly sustains our hearts, as well as draws us out into the most precious exercises of communion and worship; though, no doubt, Satan and men have sadly corrupted the truth in order to damage souls, and dishonor the Lord Jesus; and thus rapidly bring about that condition of things which we know will end in apostasy and judgment.

On turning to the eleventh verse of Jude's epistle, we perceive the three principal ways in which men and Satan are acting so as to bring about that character of false profession, which will end in judgment, and in being spued out of Christ's mouth. (See Jude 14, 15, and Rev. 3:16.) We read,

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam, and perished in the gainsaying of Core {Jude 11}.

Thus we have *Cain's way*, *Balaam's error*, and *Korah's gainsaying*, characterizing people professing Christianity. "The way of Cain" was religiousness without the sacrifice of a life;

"the error of Balaam," ministering in divine things for reward; and "the gainsaying of Korah," the despising of God's order of priesthood, and setting up a false one. Now, if you look around, you can scarcely fail to see that the three characteristics of Christianity which have been, and still are being attacked by the enemy, are the infinite value of the one sacrifice of Christ, the divine order of ministry by gifts bestowed by Christ in heaven, and the present divine order of priesthood sought to be supplanted by another of human appointment. This warning voice of Scripture therefore as to "the gainsaying of Core" is most solemn, and shows that a true acquaintance with God's present order of priesthood is one of the ways of escaping Satan's wiles, and of living and acting more according to God's mind. On turning to the sixteenth chapter of Numbers, we find that "the gainsaying of Core" was not an effort to set aside priesthood altogether, but to supplant God's order by a false one; and we know how summary and severe the judgment of God was upon them for it. May we know God's mind about this!

It is quite true that God had an order of priesthood in the last dispensation; but it was earthly in its character, that is for service on earth, and successional; though it was divine in its appointment. It consisted of Aaron and his sons, which in some respects, as we shall see, remarkably shadowed forth God's present order of priesthood, which is divine in its appointment

too, but heavenly, and not successional. It consists of Jesus the Son of God, gone into heaven itself -- THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST, and those who believe in Him who are PRIESTS -- an holy priesthood, and a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). It is an enquiry into Scripture-teaching on the priesthood of Jesus the Son of God which we now propose to enter upon; and may God help us by His Spirit to approach this most glorious subject with that reverence and godly fear which it demands.

In the fourth chapter of Hebrews, the priesthood of Jesus the Son of God is presented to us in connection with the sharp and powerful searchings of *the word of God*, by which the thoughts and intents of the heart are discerned. The great High Priest is therefore introduced to us there to sustain and comfort us before God as His creatures, while conscious of infirmities under the scrutinizing power of His written word (Heb. 4:12-16).

In the eighth chapter of Hebrews, our High Priest is brought before us in relation to *the throne of God* --

set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (Heb. 8:1).

Not only does He hold the highest place, but is *seated* there, because He had perfected us for ever by His one offering. Now, how could we think of approaching God's throne, unless we knew One was there who had glorified God in the accomplishment of our eternal redemption?

In the tenth chapter of the Hebrews, priesthood is again set forth concerning our being in *the presence of God*, our entering into the holiest. This is therefore specially connected with communion and worship. Thus

Jesus the Son of God, who is passed into the heavens {see Heb. 4:14},

is presented as a "High Priest," which "we have" when exposed to the searching qualities of "*the word of God*," when thinking of the infinitely holy claims of the *throne of God*, or entering into the holiest, *the presence of God*.

But observe the greatness of this Person. He is called a great High Priest, and He is declared to be Jesus the Son of God. The essential Son surely, and yet perfect man, and gone into the very glory of God --

passed through the heavens --

"Who knows what sore temptations are,
For He has felt the same."

Perfect man, made of a woman, who completely did the will of Him that sent Him; yet no less God, the essential and eternal Son, who had glory with the Father before the world was; for

in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily {Col. 2:9}.

What infinite glory, perfection, almightiness, and everlastingness, therefore are in Him! What a Priest! How transcendently glorious is He! How the glory of an earthly, fallible, mortal priesthood, though in a former dispensation of divine institution, fades away before the eternal excellency of our great High Priest!

Before entering further on the contemplation of this blessed Person and His precious ministry, there are some

erroneous thoughts current among Christians which call for a few remarks. The common idea that Christ is now interceding in heaven for everybody, is entirely without Scripture authority. No doubt He is the one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; but mediation or standing between God and men for a time to avert the blow of divine vengeance, is very different from the activity of a heart going out in deepest interest toward God for blessing on the objects of His love, who have been reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. Was Aaron a high priest for any but those who were standing in relationship with God, a people who had been delivered from judgment by the blood of the lamb? Again, did not our Lord say,

I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine (John 17)?

On this point Heb. 7:25 is also very clear, for it plainly states for whom Jesus is now interceding. We are told it is

for them that come unto God by Him {see Heb. 7:25},

which certainly includes all believers on Him, and excludes all others. It is really unaccountable how Christian people have picked up the idea, that Christ is a High Priest and Intercessor for all men. But how precious is the fact that Christ sends the gospel to every creature, and that His heart in heaven is ever going forth in living ministry on the behalf of those who believe; and about this there can be no doubt, because such

come unto God by Him.

Oh the unutterable preciousness of this truth! An honored servant of the Lord once said, "If I heard Christ interceding for me in the next room, how happy it would make me! But distance makes no difference." Let us, then, dear Christian reader, lift up our hearts with joy and thanksgiving for the precious fact, that the heart of Christ on high, who ever liveth, is ever active in loving ministry on our behalf.

There are some who speak of the intercessory work of Christ in heaven as necessary to appease God's anger lest it should break loose upon us, and some who have received this error actually call on the Lord Jesus to pray for them. Such, however, have greatly mistaken God's mind on the matter. The truth is, that the same grace that moved the heart of God to give His only-begotten Son, and deliver Him up for our offences to the death of the cross, also appointed Him to the work of priesthood. We are told that

Christ glorified not Himself to be made an high priest {Heb. 5:5},

and also that

the Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 7:21).

Again, it is the thought of not a few that it is by Christ's sacrifice and priesthood put together that we are saved. If this were the case, then neither His work on the cross as sacrifice was perfect, nor His work on the throne as Priest; but the truth is that both are perfect, as His sitting there shows. It is because His work on the cross was finished according to the will of God that we are

perfected for ever by that one offering {see Heb. 10:14}.

It therefore needs nothing to be added to it. And it is because of the everlasting efficacy of the work of the cross, never needing another offering to be added to it, that He *sat down* in perpetuity on the right hand of God. This Aaron could not do. He could never sit down, because the same sacrifices needed constant repetition, and even then, however numerous, could not *take away* sins. The priesthood of Christ was not needed to add to the perfect efficacy of the sacrifice; for, as we have seen,

by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14).

The fact is, that the priestly office of Christ is exercised on behalf of saved people, those who were far off, but now in Christ, and made nigh by His blood --

for them that come unto God by Him (Heb. 7:25).

Both in Aaron the typical priest, and in Christ the antitype, their functions were set in activity for the benefit of those who already stood in relationship with God.

Priesthood, too, is always

in things pertaining to *God* (Heb. 2:17),

not the Father, but *God*. He is called of *God*. He sat down on the right hand of *God*. He now appears in the presence of *God*, or before the face of God, for us. He intercedes for them that come unto *God* by Him. It is because of this that priesthood does not take up the believer's sins; for being brought to God, reconciled to God, born of God, and children of God, the question of our sins as God's children has to do with the Father. Hence the Father's injunction *to His children* is to

sin not;

but

if any man sin we have an Advocate with (it does not say God, but with) the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous {1 John 2:1}.

Our Advocate is the Righteous One. Priesthood then has to do with us in relation to *God*, and that not about sins, while advocacy has to do with us and *the Father*, and that too about our sins. It is very important to be clear about this; for having been cleansed from all sin by the blood of Jesus on believing, and made children of God, our path is to walk in the light, in love, in truth, in faith, and in the Spirit according to our Father's will; in fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Any disobedience, or transgression, or failure is unsuitable to the Father, and consequently communion is broken, and we become accountable to Him, not as sinners, as we once were, but as children. Here self-judgment and confession on our part come in, and also the advocacy of the Lord Jesus, prior to restoration to the Father's fellowship. It is a question of communion, not of justification; for

by Christ all that believe *are justified from all things* {see Acts 13:39};

but the Father cannot give us to enjoy His fellowship while our sins and transgressions are unjudged. And, blessed be His name,

if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and *to cleanse us from* all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9),

There is also another ministry of Christ in heaven on our behalf which must not be confounded with priesthood. I refer to the Lord's washing of His disciples' feet. (See John 13.) This is not Christ as priest appearing before the face of God for us, neither is it the precious action of His advocacy with the Father about our sins; but it is a most gracious activity of our blessed Lord on our behalf to maintain us in communion *with Himself*; as He said to Peter,

If I wash thee not, thou hast *no part with Me* {John 13:8}.

It is the warm desire of our adorable Lord, that during His absence we may know what entering into His own love, and mind, and ways, and councils, and service are -- having part with Himself. When Peter saw the blessed Lord gird Himself with a towel, take water, pour it into a basin, and begin to wash the disciples' feet, he cried out,

Thou shalt never wash my feet;

which brought from our Lord the gracious announcement already referred to, of the imperative necessity of this ministry in order to maintain us in communion with Himself.

If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me (John 13:8).

And when Peter, with equal rashness, replied,

Not my feet only, but also my hands, and my head {John 13:9},

it served to bring out from the Master's heart the true meaning of this most precious ministry.

Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit (John 13:10).

Clearly showing us that a believer in the Lord Jesus, having been completely cleansed from sin by the blood, never needs to have that process repeated; but he does need to have the defilement removed from him which he may contract in his daily walk. In other words, he that has been washed all over in a bath, needs only to have his feet washed from the defilement he may have contracted in his subsequent walk. And this charmingly illustrates one of the most blessed ministries of Christ on our behalf while He is seated on the right hand of God. It is the needed application of *His word* to our souls, to cleanse away from us the evil we pick up in our daily walk, so as to keep our hearts free and happy for communion with Himself. We read in Ephesians of

the washing of water by the word {Eph. 5:26}.

All this too was blessedly foreshadowed by the altar of burnt-offering and laver. After the priests had been washed all over, and sprinkled with blood, it needed never to be repeated; but after this, when they had been consecrated to the service of the sanctuary, though often handling the sacrifices, &c., they went to the laver, and washed their hands and feet, every time they went into the tabernacle of the congregation, to have to do with the things of God and the service of the sanctuary. It is a mistake therefore to suppose that when a believer is conscious of defilement, and of having failed and dishonored the Lord, that he needs, as some say, to take his place again *as a sinner*, and to *be sprinkled again* with the blood; that would be in type to go back to the altar of burnt-offering instead of the laver. But what we have here is the wondrous care of Christ Himself over us, so ministering His word as to wash our souls clean,

and (as the wiping with the towel sets forth) making us feel so comforted in His presence as to be able to go on in happy fellowship with Himself. While defilement is on our consciences, communion with our precious and infinitely holy Lord must be hindered; but He restoreth our souls, washes us with the word, and gives us again to enjoy the blessedness of His own presence with us.

But there is another character of ministry on our behalf most graciously carried on by our adorable Lord at this present time. I refer to His being the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Not only overseeing everything concerning us, but also feeding, tending, leading us into varied pasture, guiding us in difficulties and dangers, bringing us out of mischief, and setting us right when wrong. Here also we see a difference as to the character of the ministry. The truth is that the same blessed Lord, who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, sustains various offices and exercises different ministries on our behalf. And all being conducted by the same loving heart, and the objects of all these ministries being the same persons, they must necessarily in some respects run one into another. Still their distinctness cannot be questioned, and the knowledge of all are needful in order to meet the varied need of our souls. We may say then, speaking in general terms, that the *Priesthood* of Christ has to do with us in things pertaining to *God*, and not about our sins. The *advocacy* of Christ has to do with the *Father*, and about the sins of His children. The action of *washing the feet* is to sustain our souls in conscious, happy communion with *Christ Himself*; while Christ as *Shepherd* cares for the state of our souls, so as to preserve us in health and strength, according to His own gracious will.

Having thus grouped together some of the precious offices of our adorable Lord, in order to show that, strictly speaking, His priesthood is not the same as His advocacy, His washing of our feet, and His shepherding of our souls, the way has been cleared to enable us to pursue our inquiry as to the priesthood of Christ in the next lecture. We can scarcely ascribe too much importance to the subject, because it has to do with the conscious sustainment of our souls day by day in the presence of God. This and every other present ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all our blessings, are no doubt based upon His atoning work; as we sometimes sing, and truly so --

“Our every joy on earth, in heaven,
We owe it to Thy blood.”

But while the death of Jesus is the foundation, the alone foundation, of all our confidence and hope, yet the precious lessons of divine grace do not end here; for Jesus is risen from among the dead; which shows that He has triumphed over death, and Satan, and the grave for us, as well as put away our sins; that we have been quickened together with Him, thus giving us new life, resurrection-life, life in One who is on the other side of death; a subject of the deepest comfort, and large in its wealth to our souls. But more than this, Jesus has ascended, gone into the presence of God; and there we are now, as to standing before God, complete in Him, who is our righteousness for evermore. And besides all this, as we have seen, He is our ever-living, ever-loving, ever-faithful High

Priest, our Advocate, the Washer of our feet, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. What an incalculable loss to those who are in ignorance of what the finished work of Jesus has accomplished for us, and what He is to us, and for us, now as risen and ascended! How terribly defective, not to say damaging to souls, to suppose that the proper place of a Christian is, as they say, “to be always at the foot of the cross!” It is impossible that Christians in such a state can be enjoying the peace, liberty, and triumph to which the grace of God so richly entitles them. How can they be in the true place of separation from the world, delivered from self, and consciously true worshipers of the Father, enjoying communion with the Lord, or be free to live unto God, and have leisure to help the souls of others.

Happy indeed are those who can look back upon the cross, and adoringly praise Him for His finished work; who can look up to the throne and now

see Jesus
by faith

crowned with glory and honor {Heb. 2:9},
and delight in all He is to God there, and all He is to us and for us; happier still to be rejoicing in the glorious prospect of His soon coming to receive us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

“Oh, precious Savior! deep Thy pain
When forth the life-blood flowed,
That washed our souls from every stain,
That paid the debt we owed.
“Cleansed from our sins, renewed by grace,
Thy royal throne above,
Blest Savior, is our destined place,
Our portion there, Thy love.

“Thine eye, in that bright cloudless day,
Shall with supreme delight
Thy fair and glorious bride survey,
Unblemished in Thy sight.”

Priesthood No. 2

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16).

In considering the priesthood of the Lord Jesus, we should never forget that this most gracious office is not added as necessary to give effect to His atoning work. On the contrary, we are told that He for ever sat down on the right hand of God, because He had by His one offering (and by that alone) perfected for ever them that are sanctified. We are also told that we are sanctified by the will of God, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10:10, 12, 14). Therefore the believer is both sanctified and perfected for ever by the one offering of Jesus upon the tree; hence the people for whom He exercises the office of priesthood are both sanctified and perfected for ever, before His priestly functions in heaven are active on their behalf. The veil having been rent from the top to the bottom, and Jesus having gone into heaven by His own blood, He, the risen, glorified man, now appears before the face of God for us; and we, by the Spirit, in virtue of His blood, and because He is there, enter into the holiest of all, and realize what it is to be there. We are not *trying* to get near, for we *are* near. *In Him* most assuredly we are, as other Scriptures show; but because of the blood which speaks to us and for us, and because Jesus is there as priest, we simply and happily go into the presence of God. As we are told,

Having therefore, brethren, boldness or liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus . . . and having a High Priest over the house of God; let us draw near.

And observe also it is added, that we thus draw near *not* to be washed and to have guilt removed, but, on the contrary, we

draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water {Heb. 10:19-22}.

In other words, it is now our unspeakable privilege to enter into the holiest of all, in conscious nearness to God, for communion and worship, because our sins are remitted, our consciences purged, the veil rent, and Jesus, in resurrection triumph and ascension glory, gone in there by His own blood, and there engaged as a merciful and faithful High Priest continually on our behalf.

In looking now at the teaching of Scripture on the functions of Jesus as our great High Priest, it is clear that His place for its exercise is the heavenlies; for us, no doubt, yea, for the very feeblest believer, for the weakest in the faith, as the precious words of the Holy Ghost plainly set forth --

for all that come unto God by Him {see Heb. 7:25}.

His priesthood was not formally exercised on earth, however sweetly the loving heart of Jesus flowed out toward His own;

for if He were on earth, He should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law. . . . But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry

(Heb. 8:4, 6).

Our High Priest then, blessed be His name, is in heaven; and among other perfections of the office, He is not a standing, but a sitting priest,

set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (Heb. 8:1).

“In heaven itself He sits,
A heavenly priesthood His.”

He is also a High Priest

after the order of Melchisedec;

that is, not a changeable priesthood, like Aaron's, which did not continue by reason of death, but made with an oath, and set up in perpetuity; as it is written,

The Lord *sware* and will not repent, Thou art a priest *for ever* after the order of Melchisedec (Heb. 7:21).

He is thus engaged officially also, not as those of old, who were compassed with infirmity, but as one

who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens {Heb. 7:26},

and who did not need to offer sacrifice for Himself. Hence we read,

The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, *which was since the law*, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore {Heb. 7:28}.

He is, moreover, like Melchisedec, a royal Priest, both King and Priest, which Aaron was not; for in millennial times

He shall sit as a Priest upon His throne (Zech. 6:13).

He is also, like Melchisedec, a blessing Priest, who brought forth bread and wine to Abraham after his battles were over, and blessed him; so will our precious Lord not only refresh and cheer our hearts by the ministry of His own grace, after all our conflicts here are ended, but will make us sweetly realize throughout all eternity that we are objects of His unchanging and everlasting blessing.

But while Jesus the Son of God will be for ever our blessing Priest, and in the day of Israel's glory will be both their King and their Priest, He now exercises on our behalf the Aaronic functions. While the High Priest's order is Melchisedec, being established by oath, perpetual and unchangeable, He is in some respects, as to His present activities, the antitype of Aaron, in appearing now in the presence of God for us. He is thus before the face of God for us, ever caring for and ministering to us.

If we turn to Ex. 28 we shall there see blessedly illustrated by the types drawn by the Holy Ghost, something of the meaning of Christ's being in God's presence for us. The whole

chapter is full of the deepest possible interest, and profoundly charming and instructive; but at present we can only look at a few leading points. Let us not forget that all these things were made according to the pattern which God showed to Moses in the mount, and that Bezaleel was energized by no less power than that of the Holy Ghost to fashion them. We can only take a brief glance at some of those glorious and beautiful shadows of our most blessed Lord.

And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and the other six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial. And thou shalt make ouches of gold; and two chains of pure gold at the ends; of wreathen work shalt thou make them, and fasten the wreathen chains to the ouches. And thou shalt make the breast-plate of judgment with cunning work; after the work of the ephod thou shalt make it; of gold, of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, and of fine-twined linen, shalt thou make it. Foursquare it shall be being doubled; a span shall be the length thereof, and a span shall be the breadth thereof. And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius, a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row. And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. And the third row a ligure, an agate, and an amethyst. And the fourth row a beryl, and an onyx, and a jasper: they shall be set in gold in their inclosings. And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes. And thou shalt make upon the breast-plate chains at the ends of wreathen work of pure gold. And thou shalt make upon the breast-plate two rings of gold, and shalt put the two rings on the two ends of the breast-plate. And thou shalt put the two wreathen chains of gold in the two rings which are on the ends of the breast-plate. And the other two ends of the two wreathen chains thou shalt fasten in the two ouches, and put them on the shoulder-pieces of the ephod before it. And thou shalt make two rings of gold, and thou shalt put them upon the two ends of the breast-plate in the border thereof, which is in the side of the ephod inward. And two other rings of gold thou shalt make, and shalt put them on the two sides of the ephod underneath, toward the forepart thereof, over against the other coupling thereof, above the curious girdle of the ephod. And they shall bind the breast-plate by the rings thereof unto the rings of the ephod with a lace of blue, that it may be above the curious girdle of the ephod, and that the breast-plate be not loosed from the ephod. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually. And thou shalt put in the breast-plate of judgment the Urim and the Thummim: and they shall be upon Aaron's heart, when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually. . . . And thou shalt

make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord (Ex. 28:9-38).

Observe, in these types, that the names of the tribes of Israel were engraved both on the onyx stones and on the breast-plate. In the former, they are looked at collectively; in the latter, individually. In one sense the Church, which is His body, or the saints, looked at in their unity, must always be presented in Him who is their Head before God; while, on the other hand, as the smallest tribe in Israel, as well as the greatest, was represented by a separate jewel and distinct engraving, so each believer is now always kept before the face of God -- held up, as the shoulders show us (the place of strength), by His almighty power, as well as by His perfect love, as the breast-plate worn over the *heart* sets forth. Each precious stone being enclosed in gold, seems to imply that we are thus kept before our God in Christ, who is our subsisting righteousness --

Made the righteousness of God in Him {2 Cor. 5:21}.

But observe also that the shoulder-pieces are connected, divinely connected (gold being the emblem of divine righteousness) by two golden chains of wreathen work of pure gold, to assure us that the almightiness of Jesus the Son of God, and His perfect love, both combine to preserve us in righteousness and acceptance in Himself continually before the face of God. And concerning the breast-plate, we find that it was also tied underneath with a lace of blue to the rings of the ephod, that it might never slip away from the high priest's heart; so that the type of Him, the loving One, who is

the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8}, might be most carefully preserved. Hence we read that

Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment UPON HIS HEART, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial *before the Lord* continually. . . . Aaron shall bear the judgment of the children of Israel UPON HIS HEART before the Lord continually {Ex. 28:29, 30},

But there is another point to be noticed before passing from this chapter -- the golden plate on which was engraved

Holiness to the Lord {Ex. 28:36},

which Aaron wore on a lace of blue on the forefront of the mitre

always {Ex. 28:38},

that he might bear the iniquity of their holy things. And surely it is the sense of our shortcomings, defects in our service, and in our most solemn acts of worship, that tend to cast us down, and would even perhaps sap our confidence, did we not see that we are always presented before God in and by Him who is holiness to the Lord, and that our service is alone acceptable to God through Him. As it was the priest's office to pluck away the crop and feathers of a sacrifice of burnt-offering of fowls, and burn the rest upon the altar, so our adorable Lord

is able to take up our holy things, and present what is acceptable to God through Him.

With regard to the beautiful materials with which the breast-plate was made, we have, in the

gold, blue, purple, scarlet, and fine-twined linen {see Ex. 28:15},

the personal glories of the great High Priest typically set forth. So immediately did failure and sin come in after the introduction of priesthood, that there is no reason to believe that these garments of glory and beauty were ever worn before the Lord. But we can, I trust, easily see how all will be made good, when the true Melchisedec sits as a Priest upon His throne, and all the twelve tribes of Israel are set in terrestrial glory in their proper lots in the land; and with what unspeakable glory all these typical blessednesses will shine forth in moral worth, and unfading excellence, in their true Messiah, when He reigns before His ancients gloriously. We can, also, happily enter into and enjoy the precious lessons these types and shadows read to us, as to the meaning of that blessed One having entered into heaven itself by His own blood, and now appearing before the face of God for us. And how touching to the feeblest believer to find that he is included among all those who are thus so wondrously blessed; for it is for

all who come unto God by Him {see Heb. 7:25}!

This surely every believer can say, even the weakest babe in the faith, that *he comes unto God by Christ*.

1. The first practical lesson for our hearts suggested by the contemplation of this glorious High Priest in heaven for us, is, that He both demands and warrants our unwavering confidence. Hence the apostle says,

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession {Heb. 4:14},

or *let us hold fast the confession*. This does not say, "Hold fast your faith," or "Hold on in faithfulness," blessed and important as it is to continue both in faith and faithfulness; but seeing that Christ has so taken hold of us, that, whether we are thinking of Him or not, He is faithful, He changes not -- that His merciful and unwearying heart is continually taken up with us, in presenting us always before the face of God, -- we cannot hesitate to confess Him as our life, righteousness, never-failing security and hope, spite of all the changes within and around in this checkered and sinful scene. Let us then "hold fast the confession." It is His faithfulness, His grace, His abundant goodness, which is the ground of true confidence; and especially when we see that Jesus our great High Priest is presenting us, in divine righteousness, in His own acceptance before God continually. Dear Christian brethren, we do well thus to contemplate the moral perfections and excellences of our High Priest. When we grow cold and forgetful of Him, does He forget us? Never. Nothing can and nothing will ever cause Him for one moment to cease to bear us up before our God in the perfectness of His unchanging love, and in the almightiness of His everlasting strength. What an unspeakable basis of rest and confidence our God has given

us in Christ Jesus!

"I change, He changes not,
My Christ can never die;
His love, not mine, the resting-place,
His truth, not mine, the tie.
I know He liveth now
At God's right hand above;
I know the throne on which He sits,
I know *His truth* and *love*."

2. The second point to notice in the functions of our precious priest in heaven is His *sympathy*. For

we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of *our infirmities* {Heb. 4:15}.

Observe, it is not sins, but infirmities; for surely that infinitely Holy One could have no sympathy with us in sin, nor could we wish Him; besides, we know that He suffered for sins. But "infirmities" are short of sins and transgressions. He knows that often our spirits are willing, but the flesh is weak; that again and again we break down through natural weakness in our efforts to serve and glorify Him. We would praise Him with untiring voice, but soon grow weary. We are sometimes sleeping when we ought to be praying; and are overcome with fatigue in His blessed service when our inner man would delight to go on much further. But Jesus knows all about us.

He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust {Psa. 103:14}.

He understands our frailty, feebleness, and shortcomings; and His heart is touched with deep consideration for us. He knows, too, what we are, not only as knowing all things, but as having lived here among men, and having had, as perfect man, thorough personal acquaintance with every element at work in man. And He is certainly not less mindful of His own dear ones *now* than He was *then*. If the sorrowing hearts of Mary and Martha drew forth tears of sympathy from their loving Savior, when He knew that in a little while Lazarus would again be by their side in all the vigor of health and brotherly affection, though He has changed His place from earth to heaven, His heart cannot love less on that account. How sweet then to be able to look up to Him, when conscious of our own infirmities, and fully to count upon Him as a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother --

"Whose heart is filled with tenderness,
Whose very name is love."

We have not then an High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but who is

"Touched with a sympathy within,
And knows our feeble frame";

Now in the presence of God for us,

"And, though ascended, feels afresh
What every member bears."

3. Our High Priest is also our *Succourer* in temptation.

In that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted (Heb. 2:18).

His watchful eye never taken off us, His heart ever caring for us, and thus being objects of His constant care and activity, there is not an advance of Satan towards us that escapes His

vigilance, not a snare laid, not a fiery dart hurled, not a wile projected against the feeblest of His saints, but all is open and manifest to His all-seeing eye; and, blessed be His name, He is able to succor us. He has known terrible temptation Himself. The foul breath of the great adversary must have been exquisite suffering to His holy heart; and it is true that He did suffer thus; for

He was in all points tempted like as we are {Heb. 4:15},

sin excepted. He is then able to defeat Satan, to strengthen us to resist him, to keep us from being carried away by him, to preserve our feet from being entangled in the meshes of his net, to uphold us lest we fall, to deliver us from his wiles, to strengthen our faith to quench his fiery darts, and to enable us to stand fast in Christ, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. How comforting then is the thought, that there is a perfect One in the glory who resisted Satan in temptation, and, through death rendered null him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, who triumphed over him in resurrection from among the dead, and who assures us that

He is able to succour them that are tempted {Heb. 2:18}.

4. Our Lord in the glory as our great High Priest is deeply concerned about our *need*. He is constantly saving us from the ten thousand difficulties and perplexities which cross our path. In this way He saves us to the uttermost, or right on to the end. Having saved our souls, saved us from the wrath to come, He saves us day by day from the things of men, and Satan, and the world, which sometimes threaten to swallow us up. For this, too, He is ever living to intercede for us. His intercession then as our High Priest is not about our sins, but about our need. We are therefore enjoined to

come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of *need* (Heb. 4:16).

Oh how precious is the fact that Jesus, having saved us from the wrath to come by the blood of the cross, is now pleading for us in heaven about our present *need*! As the Captain of our salvation, He is leading us on our way, and, unlike other captains, has actually gone before His soldiers to break down every impediment for them, and now as our great High Priest ever intercedes for us with God. He never forsakes, never forgets us, never slumbers nor sleeps, but is always active on our behalf, ever merciful and faithful, ever living to make intercession for them that come unto God by Him. He will thus carry us through every difficulty thrown in our way by men and Satan, and bring us off more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Oh the blessedness of having such a great High Priest to sustain our hearts in happy, holy liberty in God's presence! One, too, who can sympathize with us as to our infirmities, succour us in temptation, and daily save us through His ever-living and all-prevalent intercession. How unspeakably precious to be able to look up, and see that no weakness nor failure on our part, no, not even eternity itself, can erase the graving of our names from His heart! And when we would be easily cast down with humbling views of our weakness, forgetfulness, and shortcomings, oh the unutterable blessedness of looking up and seeing that infinitely loving, faithful heart

ever engaged about us, and ever presenting us before the face of God in all the virtue and fragrance of an everlastingly anointed High Priest! And if the precious ointment, with its exquisite perfume, when poured upon the head of Aaron, ran down to the skirts of his garments, surely the precious savour of Christ must, by the Holy Ghost, rest upon every member of His body. It was the same precious anointing oil which was poured upon the sons of Aaron as upon Aaron himself; and so the same Holy Ghost that Jesus received of the Father has also been given to, and has anointed those, who are, through grace, brought into everlasting relationship with Him. But this leads us to the consideration of God's present priests on earth, which will occupy us on another occasion, if the Lord will. Meanwhile, let us not forget, that because the veil is rent, and Jesus is gone into heaven with His own blood, that there we now are, and there is our sanctuary. Because of the blood, and also because our High Priest is there, we have liberty to enter into the holiest at all times, and abide there and worship. As we sometimes sing --

“‘Tis finished -- here our souls can rest,
His work can never fail;
By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,
We pass within the veil.

“Within the holiest of all,
Cleansed by His precious blood,
Before the throne we prostrate fall,
And worship Thee, O God.”

Priesthood

No. 3

Unto Him that loveth us, and has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen (Rev. 1:5, 6).

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the Scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed (1 Pet. 2:5-8).

The fact, is here plainly stated, that all those who are loved by Jesus, and washed from their sins in His own blood, *are made priests unto God*. They are also called

an holy priesthood {1 Pet. 2:5},

and

a royal priesthood {1 Pet. 2:9}

Their life is one of entire dependence and faith, as the apostle so forcibly expresses it --

The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

But in the typical instruction of Old Testament Scriptures we have abundant details as to the characteristics, maintenance, and occupation of priests.

We know from the epistle to the Hebrews how remarkably the Aaronic high priest was a type of Jesus, our great High Priest; and we know also that Aaron's sons *only* were priests, and that they were chosen of God, washed, clothed, consecrated by blood, anointed with oil, and in relationship by birth with the high priest. All pretensions to priesthood apart from these realities were accounted false. When any did come forward professing to be priests, and could not trace their genealogy, they were put from the priesthood as polluted (Neh. 7:64). And when the sons of Korah sought to set aside God's order of priesthood by setting up another of their own, He caused the earth to cleave asunder and swallow them up, and all that appertained to them (Num. 16:20). The order of priests that God now has, is, as we have seen, composed of those who are washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus. Such are *made* priests unto God. They need no other qualification than God gives them. The order is divine. They are priests unto God. They are consecrated to the office, *made priests* -- and in some striking particulars were remarkably set forth in type by the sons of Aaron. Let us consider a few of these similarities.

Firstly, Aaron's sons were priests by the *election of God*. God chose them, and no others. They were priests unto God by His gracious choice. Of all the tribes and families in Israel, no other people than the sons of Aaron could fulfil the office of priesthood. So now it has pleased God to choose those *only* who are washed from their sins in the blood of Jesus. Such

only are made nigh to Him, and have liberty to come into His presence to minister in holy things; for

in Christ Jesus we who sometimes were far off *are made nigh* by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

Such too, according to the Father's eternal purpose and grace, were *chosen* in Christ before the foundation of the world. We are priests therefore by God's *election*.

Secondly, Aaron's sons were priests by *birth* -- priests as sons of Aaron. When a son of Aaron was born, he was necessarily at a certain age a priest. No one else in Israel could be a priest. No interest, talents, wealth, or anything besides, could procure the office. These only were priests. Such only were recognized by God. They must be Aaron's sons. So now no one is a priest who is not born of God, and every one who is born of God is a priest, and every believer is this through grace; for He is born of the Spirit; he is a child of God; he is in everlasting relationship with Jesus the great High Priest. Scripture therefore speaks of us as

born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. 1:23).

We are priests then by a new and spiritual birth.

Thirdly, Aaron's sons were priests by *consecration* -- *made* priests unto God. They were *washed*.

Moses brought Aaron and *His sons*, and washed them with water {Lev. 8:6}.

So we are *washed* from our sins in the blood of Jesus -- thoroughly cleansed by that blood which cleanseth us from all sin. They were clothed with garments provided by God. So we stand in Christ, who is our righteousness. Sins being thus remitted, and the conscience purged by the blood of Jesus, we can

draw near to God with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water {see Heb. 10:22}.

They were also consecrated, or set apart by God for Himself, by being *sprinkled with the blood* of the ram of consecration.

He brought Aaron's sons, and Moses put of the blood upon the tip of their right ear, and upon the thumbs of their right hands, and upon the great toes of their right feet: and Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar round about. (See Lev. 8:6, 24.)

Thus they were sanctified by the blood, set apart for God and His blessed service. The right ear was marked with blood to teach us that we are to hearken to God's voice. Not to lend our ears to receive the evil and foolish communications which men would make, but amid the clatter of ten thousand conflicting voices to hearken to what God says.

A wise man will *hear* {Prov. 1:5}.

The blessed Lord said,

He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious (Isa. 1:4, 5).

There are two great avenues to the heart -- the eye and the ear. By attracting the eye, Satan often succeeds in turning away the heart, by taking us off the true object of faith, and occupying us with something else to gratify the lust of the eye. Some of the most serious falls in Scripture have been through the lust of the eye. The other principal avenue to the heart is the ear. If Satan can get us to hearken to the voice of the flatterer or to the roar of the lion, he will often turn us away from the posture of listening to the voice of Him whose we are, and whom by grace we serve. It is then our true posture of soul to be consciously set apart for God, and for Him only, as sanctified by the blood of Jesus; and waiting upon and for Him, hearkening to His voice, we always find to be the true path of blessing.

Whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil {Prov. 1:33}.

But we should never forget that

a flattering mouth worketh ruin {Prov. 26:28},

and

a whisperer separateth chief friends {Prov. 16:28}.

The thumb of the right hand being sprinkled with blood, is no doubt to teach us that we are now to work for God, to minister according to His will; that we are set apart to be thus active in His blessed service; for we all have some service committed to us.

He gave to every man his work {see Mark 13:34};

Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ {Eph. 4:7}.

We each have ministry of some kind to carry out in faithfulness to God. We are all His children, and His servants. The hand is sprinkled with blood, sanctified, set apart for His service, and for none other. Whether therefore we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to God's glory. We are not to live unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and rose again. Our bodies are to be consecrated to His service. We are to present *our bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service; for we are not our own, but bought with a price; we are therefore to glorify God in *our body*. On these accounts also the great toe of the right foot was sprinkled with blood, to show that our walk should be in obedience to Him, every step ordered by the Lord. The ear was first sprinkled to show that we must receive all our commands and instructions from God, in order then to minister for Him, and walk with Him. We thus see that another characteristic of those priests, so typical of us, was that they

were wholly set apart for God, by being sprinkled with the blood of the ram of consecration -- a point of the utmost practical importance, and never to be lost sight of; and if there were no other reason, this is enough to show the utter folly and complete delusion of people being made priests by human appointment, not to refer to the exceeding sinfulness of despising God's present order of a heavenly, spiritual, holy, and royal priesthood.

But this was not all. The last point to notice in this solemn business of consecration of the priests, is, that they were anointed with oil, an unmistakable type of our being anointed with the Holy Ghost, as an inspired apostle writes:

Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath *anointed* us, is God (2 Cor. 1:21);

while another apostle writes:

The *anointing* which ye have received of Him abideth in you (1 John 2:27).

This is our power for service, and this makes the character of priesthood now to be spiritual and holy, not merely human or educational, not to say successional. The latter is but a poor caricature of the former, and not only lifeless and powerless, but, far worse than anything else, it sets aside the divine order by substituting another. Those who are God's priests now, then, are sanctified by the blood of Jesus, and anointed by the Holy Ghost.

Fourthly, Aaron's sons were in such relationship with Aaron the high priest as no others were, and were also associated with him in the service of the sanctuary. So now every believer, whether man, woman, or child, is by the new birth, and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, brought into real relationship with Jesus our great High Priest. Being sanctified by God, and made children,

He is not ashamed to call us *brethren* {see Heb. 2:11}.

We are also united to Him by the Holy Ghost; so that

we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30}.

Thus are we in spiritual and eternal relationship with Jesus now in the heavens, our life and righteousness. Moreover, having liberty to enter into the holiest of all, where Jesus acts as Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man, we offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Him. As none but Aaron and his sons had access to the sanctuary for the service of priesthood (Moses being a type of Jesus, as mediator and king, being king in Jeshurun), so now all who are priests, and none else, have liberty to enter into the holiest where Jesus is.

Thus we see that, like Aaron's sons, believers *now* are priests unto God, by election, by birth, by consecration, by being in relationship with the High Priest, and associated with Him in the service of the sanctuary; the distinction between high priest and priest being always preserved. Jesus, though *King of kings*, as well as High Priest, has not yet come forth to reign; and we too, though both *kings* and priests, await His time of manifested glory ere we reign with Him. Now we exercise our priestly office, and ere long through matchless grace shall sit on thrones and wear crowns. Now we are both

an holy priesthood {1 Pet. 2:5},

and

a royal priesthood {1 Pet. 2:9};

now we suffer with Him, *then* we shall *reign* with Him.

Again, because they were God's priests, He provided everything for their sustenance. He prescribed what they were to eat, and what they were to abstain from, so as to be fitted for their office. To feed on what was forbidden, or to have abstained from what God ordered, would alike have rendered them incompetent for the true work of priesthood. Here also the typical instruction set forth touching the sons of Aaron is deeply instructive. The food prescribed, too, was for priests *only* --

a stranger shall not eat thereof {Ex. 29:33}.

The *priests* were to eat and be satisfied, and the remainder might not be eaten by a *stranger*, but it was for God; it was burnt, and offered up to God by fire.

If ought of the flesh of the consecrations, or of the bread, remain unto the morning, then thou shalt burn the remainder with fire; *it shall not be eaten*, because it is holy. (See Ex. 29:33, 34.)

The priests were to feed on the sacrifices, in order to be fitted for their service. Observe the divine directions:

They shall eat those things wherewith the atonement was made, *to consecrate and to sanctify them* {Ex. 29:33}.

This is both simple and positive. We know who has made atonement, and by what sacrifice alone it has been accomplished; and it is upon that blessed, spotless, perfect One, who loved us and gave Himself for us, that we have to feed for real strength and blessing. Remark here, that the priests were *to eat*; not merely to look upon and talk about, but to handle and receive, so as to derive nourishment and strength, refreshment and comfort, from the same sacrifice by which atonement had been made; thus teaching us that it is personal communion with the Lord which can alone qualify for the activities of priestly service. The believer, already washed from his sins, having a purged conscience, accepted in Christ, is therefore to find his daily strength for priestly service in drawing blessing from Him who was the one Sacrifice which was once offered. We are to feed upon Him -- to taste, enjoy, and enter into the qualities, worth, perfections, and glory of Him who redeemed us by His death upon the cross, so as to be strengthened for the faithful discharge of our priestly office. "But how are we to feed upon Him?" some may ask. We reply, The written word reveals Him, and the Holy Ghost given unto us testifies of Him. Thus, pondering the Holy Scriptures in dependence on the Holy Ghost, and receiving God's thoughts in faith, we enter into the divine testimony of Jesus the Son of God -- His personal glories, His finished work, what He was and is to God, what He is to us and for us; thus our hearts are gladdened, and our inner man strengthened. In this way we shall be so attracted to Him, so taken up with His perfections, that in our measure we shall be able to say,

We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth {John 1:14}.

And being occupied with Him, He will be to us the attractive,

absorbing, commanding, and satisfying object of our hearts. We thus obtain strength for service. It is communion, entering into the love and power of Christ, and finding satisfaction and delight in that same object which perfectly satisfies and delights the heart of the Father.

Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ {1 John 1:3};

for, by the communion of the Holy Ghost, we have thoughts, feelings, joy, and rest produced in our souls in joint-participation (wondrous grace!) with those of the Father and His Son. Does the Father delight and rest in that beloved Son, who glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work which He gave Him to do? So do we. Is He an object capable of filling and satisfying the Father's heart? Assuredly He is. He is then much more than enough for our hearts. And does that beloved Son, now in the glory, delight in all the results of His accomplished work! And do not we? Does He not take deepest interest in His present work on earth, both in evangelizing and in care for His own flock? And do not we? Is He not looking forward with earnest expectation of having us with Him to behold His glory? And are not we looking and waiting for Him? And if we ponder it for a moment, we must see that the blessed Spirit, the other Comforter, who has been given by the Father to dwell in us, could not produce in us a lower order of thought, feeling, joy, and hope, than suit the Father and the Son, though our apprehensions may be small and poor. Oh the blessedness of this precious fellowship! How it kindles our hearts to go out in adoring worship and thanksgiving, attracts and sets our minds on things above where Christ sitteth, and draws us onward in testimony for Him who so richly loved us, and so willingly gave Himself for us! What a mine of wealth, what untold treasure, is wrapped up in those precious words,

They shall eat of those things wherewith the atonement was made, *to consecrate and to sanctify them* (Ex. 29:33)!

It has always been God's way to feed His people. In the sandy desert He rained down bread from heaven day by day, and they had only to gather up and eat of His gracious and abundant provision. When they arrived in the land flowing with milk and honey, and the manna ceased, they ate of

the old corn of the land {Josh. 5:11, 12}.

But when Jesus came and announced Himself to be

the bread of God {John 6:33},

the bread of life {John 6:35},

He said,

The bread that I will give is *my flesh*, which I will give for the life of the world {John 6:51}.

He is now, then, "the bread of God," and

the living bread {John 6:51};

concerning which He added,

Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, shall live by Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6:56-58).

Enough has been quoted from Scripture to show the imperative importance of the believer being occupied with Christ as drawing his resources from Him, so as to be strengthened and fitted for service; not only to do the will of God, but to do it in the spirit and mind of Christ. By feeding on the same sacrifice

wherewith the atonement was made {Ex. 29:33},

as we have seen, we are in communion with Him, we dwell in Him, and He dwells in us. His thoughts engage our minds, His grace pervades our souls, we enter into His unspeakable love, and He has a place in our hearts; thus His presence is enjoyed, and we find our place with Him in the true sanctuary inside the veil. Without this personal intercourse and communion with the Lord, we cannot possibly carry on the high and holy functions of priesthood; and though, through marvelous grace, we are objects of His untold love, washed from our sins in His blood, and have been made a royal and holy priesthood, we shall have little or no sense of it, and lose one of the highest occupations of soul, and one of the most exalted privileges that could possibly be known by us on the earth, during the absence of our precious Lord Jesus. Blessed be God, the Scriptures testify of Christ, and the Holy Ghost guides into all truth, and takes of the things of Christ and shows unto us, so that we are well furnished for the life and walk of faith through

a barren and thirsty land where no water is {see Psa. 63:1};

where, with all the bodily comforts and blessings we enjoy, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, for our souls; but in Christ we have enough to satisfy our every need, a sufficiency for every requirement. Oh the blessedness of thus finding more than we could possibly have desired or needed in Christ, instead of complaining of the dry and disappointing character of broken cisterns, and the barrenness of the desert path! Thus we can look above, and step out with quickened step and freshly-girt loins, singing --

“His *word a light* before us spreads,
By which our path we see;
His love, a banner o’er our heads,
From harm preserves us free.

“Jesus, *the bread of life*, is given
To be our daily food;
The *Rock* that gave the streams from heaven,
The Spirit of our God.

“Lord, ‘tis enough; we ask no more;
Thy grace around us pours
Its rich and unexhausted store,
And *all its joy is ours*.”

Priesthood

No. 4

And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: and that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; and that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses. And Moses spake unto Aaron, and unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons that were left, Take the meat-offering that remaineth of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and eat it without leaven beside the altar: for it is most holy: and ye shall eat it in the holy place, because it is thy due, and thy sons' due, of the sacrifices of the Lord made by fire: for so I am commanded. And the wave breast and heave shoulder shall ye eat in a clean place; thou, and thy sons, and thy daughters with thee: for they be thy due, and thy sons' due, which are given out of the sacrifices of peace-offerings of the children of Israel. The heave shoulder and the wave breast shall they bring with the offerings made by fire of the fat, to wave it for a wave-offering before the Lord; and it shall be thine, and thy sons' with thee, by a statute for ever; as the Lord hath commanded (Lev. 10:8-15).

Besides abstaining from unclean things, which every Israelite was bound to do, the priests were on no account to drink wine or strong drink. This direction was simple enough, but doubtless reads to us very serious lessons. The effect of wine and strong drink is to inflame or stimulate the natural passions, which cannot be done without soul damage. Hence the Holy Ghost, by Peter, enjoins us to

abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul
{1 Pet. 2:1}.

If we are doing anything for the strengthening of the passions of an evil nature, the result must be disastrous to our spiritual health, and therefore unfitting for the due exercise of our priestly office.

There are three reasons given why we should avoid thus gratifying the fleshly appetite. First, they were told not to drink wine nor strong drink, when they went into the tabernacle of the congregation,

lest ye die {Lev. 10:9}.

And what believer of any experience does not know the lethargy and dead state of soul which fleshly indulgence induces?

To be carnally minded is death {Rom. 8:6}

is surely a divine axiom, and ought to be well pondered by us. Were this principle more heeded by saints, it may be that many would be able to ascertain why they have so often to complain of indolence and deadness as regards the things of the Lord. If we would live godly, ungodliness and worldly lusts must be denied. We are quickly influenced either by good or evil, and the Spirit within us, the power of godliness, is easily grieved, and

he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption
{Gal. 6:8}.

Secondly,

That ye may *put difference* between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean (Lev. 10:10).

From this we gather that another effect of fleshly ways, is to obscure spiritual vision and hinder spiritual discernment. One

of the first symptoms of souls having departed from the Lord often is, that they justify what they have formerly condemned. After Samson's folly and trifling with Delilah, the first thing the Philistines did was to put his eyes out. Such blindness, too, the enemy will effect on souls who give way to fleshly indulgence; at least they will be unable to put difference between holy and unholy, between unclean and clean, qualities which are absolutely necessary for the priestly office. (See Lev. 13:2, &c.) If we would then have discernment according to God, we must abstain from fleshly lusts. Why have some dear saints such difficulty in perceiving what to others is clearly unholy and unclean in God's sight? And why is there sometimes such a difference of judgment about evil among many of the Lord's people? The answer is plain. There will be no ability to put difference between holy and unholy, when the walk is careless and fleshly habits or ways encouraged. We are told that the Hebrew Christians were unable to enter into a true discernment of the Lord's things; for they were dull of hearing. Not having been practically engaged in the due exercise of priestly functions, and turning back to legal and worldly religiousness, their discernment had been little cultivated, and the disastrous effect was most manifest to the apostle. He writes:

Of whom (speaking of the Lord Jesus) we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:11-14).

I have quoted the passage at length, because of its solemn importance, and also because it almost seems like a divine commentary on the subject now immediately before us. Thirdly,

That ye may *teach* the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses (Lev. 10:11).

This point has been already anticipated by the quotation from Hebrews, where we are told that they ought to be able to teach others, instead of needing elementary teaching themselves. But this must be so, if souls are damaged by fleshly indulgence, instead of denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living a life of faith upon the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. If we would then be lively, earnest Christians, and fit for our priestly functions, be able to discern between holy and unholy, and qualified to teach others, we must abstain from fleshly lusts, and feed upon those things wherewith the atonement was made to consecrate and to sanctify us.

Avoiding wine and strong drink for the reasons given, the priests were to eat the meat-offering *in the holy place*, and the peace-offering *in a clean place*. How significant all this is! The meat-offering shows the perfect humanity of Jesus in life, the spotless One, in whom was nothing rough and inconsistent, but who was perfectly pure and even in all His ways, as the fine flour sets forth. That holy One was conceived by the Holy Ghost --

fine flour mingled with oil {see Lev. 2:1, 2}

-- and He was anointed with the Holy Ghost, as the oil *poured upon* the fine flour would teach us. As, however, God only could enter into the fulness and perfections of this precious One, a

handful of the flour and of the oil {see Lev. 6:15}

was offered to God, burnt upon the altar by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord. The remainder was food for the priests. And here we are told they were to eat the meat-offering *in a clean place*. No leaven was to be with it. Nothing unclean was to be associated with it. Elsewhere we read that they were to eat it with *unleavened bread*, and *in the holy place*. As free from leaven or uncleanness, and occupied with what is unleavened and holy, in a clean place -- that is, apart from every impure association, and in the holy place, or where God's presence is -- the priests were to eat the meat-offering. How profoundly precious yet solemn this is! How searching too, inasmuch as it shows us that no careless walk, no unjudged evil, no association with uncleanness of any kind, can be allowed in those who are exercising the holy office of priests according to God! But if self-judged, separate from all iniquity, as purged worshipers, consecrated priests, consciously in God's presence, there occupied adoringly with the infinite perfections of Him who was represented by the fine flour anointed with oil, delighting our souls in Him, and gathering strength and grace from Him, what a deep reality and precious privilege we then know the priestly office to be! This, be it observed, is emphatically communion; for God had His part as well as the priests. So we feed on the same spotless One, in whom the Father was well pleased, and to whom we must be everlastingly thankful.

But more than this. They were not only to be occupied (typically) with the perfect man Christ Jesus in His life, but also as the One who had offered Himself without spot to God. This must also be eaten *in the holy place*, for the consciousness of being in God's presence, apart from every thing unsuited to Him, is necessary for true enjoyment and appreciation of the food which His abundant grace has provided for us. It is

important, too, to notice the parts of the peace-offering which were set apart for their food. They were

the wave breast and the heave shoulder (Lev. 10:14).

Parts of the same victim which had been offered to God, and in which He had found a sweet savor. It is like the father who had provided the fatted calf, calling his returned prodigal to feast and rejoice with himself, saying,

Let *us* eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found: and they began to be merry {Luke 15:24}.

What a peace-offering! What holy joy! What matchless love! And, blessed be God, we may add too, what precious fellowship!

Now what are we to learn from this rich and abundant gift of "the wave breast and heave shoulder" for the priests' food, but that all the unsearchable, perfect love, as well as the almighty power of Christ, are laid open to us for our souls' everlasting consolation and strength? The breast the seat of the affections, and the shoulder the source of power, are thus specially before us. And in feeding, the need of our souls is very precious met, by spreading out before us both the affections and

strength of Him who made peace for us by the blood of His cross. And these parts too they could wave before the Lord as infinitely acceptable to Him, as well as most precious to us.

And what, beloved, I would ask, do we know of those exercises of soul in God's most holy presence? Do we enter into the unspeakable privilege of being in the holy place -- inside the veil? And, when in the holiest of all, is it the ever-living Jesus there for us that attracts and delights our souls? Do we triumph in His exceeding preciousness, as well as His perfect love, and His almighty power to usward? And do we rejoice thus in Him? Can we say, In whom, though now we see Him not, yet, believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory? Oh to beware of all uncleanness! We are careful not to have a spot of defilement on our bodies, then why should we not be equally jealous as to a spot of unjudged and uncleansed evil on our souls? Without sustaining food, this blessed, happy fellowship, we must become weak and faint; but feeding on the finest of the wheat, on pure honey out of the rock, the life, and strength, and perfectness of Jesus the Lord, who has washed us from our sins in His own blood, we shall be qualified for our daily continual work of priest-hood. Thus by the word of God and Spirit we shall be tracing, entering into, and enjoying His unsearchable love, and infinite power -- *love* that met us when dead in sins, and knows no change; *power* that has triumphed over all our enemies, even death itself, and taken the place of Headship over all principality and power. What joy, and peace, and vigor to our hearts the reception of these glorious realities impart! What encouragement, too, all this divine instruction gives, to keep close to the Lord Jesus! How all this grace attracts and binds our hearts to Him! How necessary, too, for how else could we be fitted for faithfully exercising our functions as priests unto God!

A few words on priestly service. Some may ask, What

was their official occupation? No one could trace the inspired account of the service of the “sons of Aaron,” without being struck with how much they had to do with the sacrifices. They were constantly serving in the sanctuary --

the priests went always into the first tabernacle accomplishing the service of God (Heb. 9:6).

But they washed their hands and feet at the laver every time they went into the tabernacle, or drew near to the altar to minister (Ex. 30:19-21). They were also to order the lamps, and were in frequent association with the high priest. Moreover, as we have seen, they were sustained in their service there by feeding on the various parts of the offerings that were allotted to them. This is communion, and it forms no small part of priestly occupation.

But besides the work immediately connected with the sacrifices, and other service of the sanctuary, it was for them, on certain occasions, to sound the silver trumpets, so as to make known the will of God, as they had learned it in the place of His presence, whether for the calling of the assembly, or for the journeying of the camps. (See Num. 10:2-8.) Sure it is that only those who now know what it is to abide in the Lord Jesus -- our sanctuary -- living upon Him by faith, and thus by the Spirit entering into His counsels and truth, will know His mind, and be the fitting instruments of communicating it to their brethren. But observe it was not a terrifying, harsh sound that characterized this ministry, it was the sweet melody of the silver trumpet that enjoined them thus to be obedient to the divine will. We should never forget this; for it is one thing to inform our brethren of what the will of the Lord is, but it is quite another thing to do so in the way and spirit which suits Him who is full of grace and truth.

The sons of Aaron, the priests, were to

blow an alarm {Num. 10:5, 6}

when the people were to go forward and take their journeys. And who now can enjoin their brethren to go onward and forward in their pilgrim course according to the will of God, but those who have tasted the blessing and enjoyed the privilege of being in His presence, as set apart for Him, both by the blood of Jesus, and the anointing of the Holy Ghost? How important, yea, indispensable, then, if we would really be a help and blessing to others, that we ourselves should have the comfort in our own souls of nearness to God, and happy relationship and intercourse with Him. Again,

When the congregation is to *be gathered together*, ye shall blow, but ye shall *not* sound an alarm (Num. 10:7).

And who, I would ask, are there in the present day to sound a note sufficiently clear, certain, and distinct for gathering together the members of the body of Christ, in His most precious name? Can they be any other than those who know personal communion with the Lord Himself, and the sweetness and joy of being in the sanctuary where Jesus our great High Priest is, and where His blood is ever speaking for us? Who can know, and long that others should taste, the reality and preciousness of being gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus who is in the midst, but those who realize personal intercourse with that blessed One, who is the central object of

the Father's heart, the alone center of coming glories, whether celestial or terrestrial, and the only true center around which, according to the will of God, every member of the body should now by the Spirit be gathered?

Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:20},

is a cardinal truth, and as fresh and real as ever.

And further. In time of distress from the oppression of the enemy, the priests were also to blow the silver trumpet, “an alarm.” And why? that they might be remembered before the Lord their God, and be saved from their enemies (Num. 10:9). How touching this is! for it shows the deep interest in the welfare of God's people, and the sympathy in time of affliction and distress those will manifest who are living in communion with the Lord Jesus, feeding in the holy place, and in a clean place, upon those things wherewith the atonement was made. Such go out in heart and soul to God on their behalf. Thus they blow the silver trumpet; for they only can intelligently discern and enter into the blessedness of *going forward* in His name, following Him, of being gathered together in His name, or in time of difficulty thinking of His name, and being saved from their enemies. In days of gladness, in solemn days, and in the beginning of months, the trumpets were also blown over the sacrifices of burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; for holy rejoicing cannot fail to be associated with those wondrous aspects of Jesus in His entire surrender to God, as well as for the ground that has been laid for our fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and with one another (Num. 10:10). The priests then were the great movers in this time of rejoicing and solemn gladness.

But priestly work now is *spiritual*. These shadows instruct us, but are not the very image. Jesus the Son of God has come, and is gone up into heaven, and has given us the Holy Ghost; and He teacheth and searcheth all things -- yea, the deep things of God. We are therefore now no longer groping our way in uncertainty and obscurity; for

the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth {1 John 2:8}.

We are then

an holy priesthood {1 Pet. 2:5},

to offer up *spiritual* sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance {Gal. 5:22, 23};

and we are to offer up *spiritual* sacrifices; not carnal religiousness,

the desires of the flesh and of the mind {Eph. 2:3},

but that which is in the energy of the Holy Ghost, who glorifies Christ, in all the variety of His workings, in bringing forth fruit in its season.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise {Psa. 51:17}!

We read, too, of

sacrifices of joy {Psa. 27:6};

of

presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God {see Rom. 12:1};

and we are also exhorted

by Him to offer *the sacrifice of praise to God continually*; that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name (Heb. 13:15).

Thus as

an holy priesthood

are we to

offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 2:5).

We are also “a royal priesthood,” to exemplify Christ in all our ways.

Ye are a royal priesthood, . . . that ye should shew forth the praises (virtues) of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

Thus in every relationship of life, at all times and under all circumstances, are we to walk as He walked. The office of priesthood, therefore, is not occasional, but continuous, whether looked at Godward or manward; whether in offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually, or in showing forth the way of godliness in daily details. Like every other aspect of divine truth, the relationship is first set forth, and then the entire consecration suited to it. “The sons of Aaron,” it is true, had a place of distinction before men, as well as the work of the sanctuary where God’s presence was; but they were to be distinguished from others, not so much by their official trappings as by their practical nearness to the place of God’s presence, and their life of consecration to Him as those who were marked with the blood and anointed with oil.

This double aspect of priesthood -- “an holy priest-hood” and “a royal priesthood” -- reads deeply serious and practical lessons to us. We are redeemed to God, children of God, and we are God’s; not our own, but His. Hence we are to live, not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us, and rose again. As another has said, we have a bright specimen of this double action of priesthood in Paul and Silas when at Philippi. With backs aching and bleeding with cruel scourging, and heartlessly thrust into the inner prison, with their feet made fast in the stocks, not all this suffering could check the outflow of praise from these *holy priests*. Even at midnight they sang praises, and not only God heard them, but the prisoners also. Thus we see the living activities of “an holy priesthood.” And when in the darkness and stillness of the night God sent an earth-quake, so that the prison doors flew open, and every prisoner’s bands were loosed, and the jailor himself was so terrified that he drew his sword in readiness to commit suicide, the loving voice of the “royal priest” was solemnly and quietly heard,

Do thyself no harm {Acts 16:28}!

How like the blessed Master, who loved His enemies, prayed for them, and instructed us to do the same! The Christ-like word of kindness, “Do thyself no harm,” was used to bring the stout-hearted jailor down at the apostles’ feet, crying out,

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? {Acts 16:30}.

The result we are familiar with. Enough has been said to illustrate the difference between “an holy priesthood” and “a royal priesthood.” It is for us not only to enter into and enjoy the various relationships into which the grace of God has brought us, as in His most holy presence, but also to see how, when truly entered upon and enjoyed, they must give a complexion and a character to all our ways. If we really enjoy the blessedness of being inside the veil, where else can it put us here but

outside the camp {see Ex. 37:7, Heb. 13:13},

the religious camp? If we are conscious that we are consecrated or

made priests unto God {Rev. 1:6},

and feed upon that which He has provided for our sustenance in a clean place in His most holy presence, and offer up praise to God continually, what else could characterize us here but showing forth the virtues of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light?

Unto Him that loveth us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen {Rev. 1:5}.

The Reign of Christ

The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The LORD at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies: He shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head (Psa. 110).

In the opening words of this psalm, the first "LORD" is in capital letters, and, when found so printed, generally indicates that it means Jehovah. The verse therefore might be read,

Jehovah said unto my Lord;

that is, Jehovah said unto Christ. This verse is frequently quoted in the New Testament. It was by it that Jesus so put the Pharisees to silence,

that no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions {Matt. 22:46}.

Our Lord searched their consciences about His own blessed person. He said,

What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He? They say unto Him, The Son of David {Matt. 22:42}.

This, so far as it went, was quite true. The blessed Lord therefore went on to say;

How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son? {Matt. 22:43-45}.

This is and always has been the difficult problem for man to solve. How could Jesus be both David's Son, and David's Lord? The answer is simple enough. As David's Lord, He was the Creator of David, for God created all things by His Son; but as born of Mary, who was of the house and lineage of David, He was David's Son. This first verse, therefore, announces the coronation of Jesus, after He had accomplished redemption and rose from the dead. It is Jehovah, His God, who had forsaken Him on the cross in righteousness, because our sins were upon Him, righteously welcoming Him as the Conqueror of all our enemies, and the One who triumphed over death, Satan, and the grave, and installing Him in the highest place of honor, power, and glory.

Sit thou on My right hand {Matt. 22:44}.

As Jehovah's righteous servant, then, He is crowned with glory and honor, and there He waits

till His enemies be made His footstool {Heb. 10:13}.

When the time comes for Jehovah to bid Him to arise and take to Himself His great power and reign, He will then

put all enemies under His feet {1 Cor. 15:25}.

It is important also to notice here that our Lord interprets the first verse of this beautiful little psalm as referring to Himself, and gives us David as the author. David is here speaking prophetically, and elsewhere he is called a prophet

(Acts 2:29, 30); and this psalm gives us a fair specimen of the scope of Old Testament prophets. We are told that it was by the Spirit of Christ that they testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which follow. They therefore passed from the sufferings to the glory or reign of Christ. This present interval of the church-time did not form a part of their prophetic ministry, for prophecy is connected with the earth; whereas the calling, standing, and relationships of the church are heavenly. We must not, then, expect to find any notice of the Church of God in the Old Testament prophets, except here and there typical representation, which they evidently did not and could not enter into. This psalm therefore, immediately after introducing us to the rejected Messiah, as now crowned with glory and honor, passes on to His reign over the living wicked, and the restoration of His ancient people to blessing in the earth. Let us never forget, then, that the scope of the Old Testament prophets was, as we are told, that of

the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which follow {see 1 Pet. 1:11};

but that glorious workmanship of the Holy Ghost which comes in between Christ's sufferings and reign, the Church of God -- the body and bride of Christ -- needed further revelation, and to be made known by different instruments, even the apostles and prophets of the New Testament (Eph. 3). To turn therefore the psalms, and the other prophecies before Christ and His apostles, into instruction concerning the church, as if it were their sphere, is to miss the mark entirely, to mistake the simple ministry of the Spirit, and to mystify some of the clearest statements of divine inspiration. Isaiah tells us that he wrote concerning Judah and Jerusalem, and David is called the sweet psalmist of Israel; and while the writings of both abound with most precious statements of the ways of faith, and pious sentences suited to God's people in every dispensation, yet there is the absence of those soul-elevating and essential doctrines of Christianity, of nearness to God, acceptance and completeness in Christ, union with Christ, and the present liberty of sonship with the veil rent, and present indwelling of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to abide with us for ever, and such like teaching, with which the inspired *epistles* abound.

We find here, like in almost all the writings of the other prophets, that the Lord's judgment of His enemies -- the living wicked -- is connected with blessing to the Jews. While ruling in the midst of His enemies, Jehovah will send

the rod of thy strength out of Zion,

when, it is added,
thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power
{Psa. 110:2, 3}.

It is impossible to apply this last sentence to the present time. By "thy people" in the prophets we are to understand God's earthly people, the Jews. *Now* we see they are *not* willing. Occasionally a solitary Jew may receive Jesus the Lord as his Savior; but as a people they still pride themselves on the traditions of the elders, and reject the true Messiah. This is the day of divine *grace*. Now grace reigns through righteousness. Now enemies to God are saved, and publicans and harlots receive Christ, which self-righteous people do not. It is the glad tidings of divine grace, even to the chief of sinners, that God now preaches. But when Jesus the Lord takes unto Himself His great power and reigns, it will be emphatically the time of His *power*; for His enemies will be made His footstool. Then every knee will be made to bow to Him, and every tongue confess His name. Then, while treading down the wicked, reigning in righteousness, He will arise upon Israel as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings. Then His people now not willing in this day of His *grace*, will be

willing in the day of His power,

and that too

in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning
{Psa. 110:3}.

At the sunrise, the bringing of that day of Christ's reign into existence, the Jews will be thus blessed. Like Thomas, they will not believe till they see, though *we* know the sweetness of those precious words,

Blessed are they that have *not seen*, and yet have believed
{John 20:29}.

When the Messiah comes in the clouds of heaven with *power* and great glory, and every eye sees Him -- when those who pierced Him look up and behold Him, they will mourn, until, like Joseph in the day of his power comforted his brethren, and established them in confidence before him, by the revelation of himself, and his forgiving love, according to the will of God, so Jesus will manifest Himself to them in this the time of His power, and establish them in confidence and blessing according to the purpose and grace of God.

Observe here that the coming of the Lord *for* us is not named, not even alluded to, because it was not the province of Old Testament prophets to do so. The revelation of our special blessings, the calling and peculiar standing and hope of the church, were reserved for the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, those who were so gifted by the ascended Christ, the Head of the body, the church, *from* whom all the gifts for the edifying of the church flow down. From them we know that the revelation of the mystery, the church, was in other ages not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, since Jesus was glorified, and the Holy Ghost came down. It is from Paul's writings, then, we learn that Christ will descend from heaven; and we shall be changed and caught up to meet Him in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord. And this we know, from other Scriptures, must take place before the Lord is publicly manifested from heaven in flaming fire,

with His mighty angels, to execute vengeance, and put all enemies under His feet. At that time we shall follow Him out of heaven (Rev. 19). I repeat, then, how closely the prophets confined their ministry to the sufferings of Christ and the glories which follow, and how silent they are about this present wonderful work of divine grace, not according to prophecy, but according to eternal purpose, in calling out the bride of Christ, and the formation of the church, which is His body. This point is not without its importance for our hearts, and helps to clear souls from much of the terrible confusion of thought and doctrine current at this time.

In turning again to the short psalm we are considering, the personal glory of the One who will thus reign is again referred to in the brief sentence,

Thou hast the dew of thy youth {Psa. 110:3}.

And surely this is none other than, though man, the unchangeable Jehovah. It is Jehovah-Jesus. Perfect as He is, and was, in every respect, neither time nor circumstances can alter Him; hence the Holy Ghost by an apostle styles Him,

Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever
{Heb 13:8}.

Again, it is touched on in another psalm, and quoted in Heb. 1:

Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed. *But Thou art the same*, and *Thy years shall have no end* (Psa. 102:25-27).

His official glory as a Royal Priest is also mentioned in the Spirit's contemplation of this scene of power and great glory:

Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek (Psa. 110:4).

Observe here the immovable foundation of this official glory -- Jehovah's oath; the perpetuity of it -- "for ever"; also the royal majesty of it -- "a priest . . . after the order of Melchizedek." According to the testimony of an inspired prophet, Israel is to know Him, like Melchizedek, to be both a Priest and a King; that as Melchizedek was *priest* of the most high God, and *king* of Salem, and Scripture is silent both as to his beginning and end, he was thus a suited type of Him who is the Son of God, and abideth a *Priest continually*, and who, according to Zechariah,

shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne, and shall be a *Priest upon His throne* {Zech. 6:13}.

What glorious majesty is here! When we search the Scriptures, what reality and soundness appear! Surely He shall wear His many crowns then; for He is worthy, however much He is still despised by men. How brief the space of time may be ere all this will be realized! At the longest, it can be but a few more risings and settings of the sun before the Scripture must be verified:

Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him {Rev. 1:7}.

Not then to be mocked and wear a crown of thorns; but to wear His many crowns, be clothed with a vesture dipped in

blood, and have a sharp two-edged sword proceeding out of His mouth, that with it He should smite the nations, &c.

“This earth, the scene of all His woe,
A homeless wild to thee,
Full soon upon His heavenly throne
Its rightful King shall see.

“Thou too shalt reign; He will not wear
His crown of joy alone:
And earth His royal bride shall see
Beside Him on the throne.

“Then weep no more; ‘tis all thine own,
His crown, His joy divine;
And sweeter far than all beside,
He, He Himself, is thine!”

And how solemn is the fact that

He must reign till He hath put *all* enemies under His feet
{1 Cor. 15:25};

not some enemies, but *all* enemies; not subdue some things, but subdue *all* things unto Himself. *Now* we can sometimes scarcely distinguish between the “friends” of Jesus and His “enemies.” *Now* the proudest of His foes often lifts his head in defiant arrogance and effrontery. *Now* the boldest blasphemers of His holy name are among the prosperous of the world. *Now* the true friends of the Lord Jesus are often among the poor and afflicted of the land, little known and less considered; but *then* all will be changed. *Now* God is long-suffering, and preaching grace; *then* the Lord Jesus will reign in righteousness, and execute judgment. *Now* the sons of God are not manifested; but *then* shall they be seen reigning with Christ, and the world will know that the Father hath loved them as He loves Jesus, His beloved Son. *Then* how eternally wide the contrast -- the *friends* of Jesus sharing His honor and glory for ever, while all His *enemies* are trodden down as ashes under the soles of His feet! How unspeakably important it is then now to be assured that we are reconciled to God, and friends of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The truth is that we *were all* enemies to God by wicked works -- the natural heart at enmity against God and Christ: loving what Christ hates, and hating what He loves. So alienated from God were we, and such sinners by nature and practice, that we needed reconciliation to God. The ground of true peace and reconciliation was laid for us in the precious blood of Christ. He

made peace through the blood of His cross {Col. 1:20}.

Enemies therefore become true lovers of God, and friends of the Lord Jesus, by being

reconciled to God by the death of His Son {Rom. 5:10}.

Such only are Christ’s true friends. All else are His enemies, and must ere long be made His footstool. The question, then, for every one to enquire is, “Am I a *friend* or an *enemy* of the Lord Jesus?” The point is vital. Eternal consequences hang upon it. Everlasting glory or everlasting punishment depends on your being His friend or His enemy. The friends of Jesus love Him. They hearken to His sweet voice. They serve Him, and are not ashamed to confess His name before men. And He loves to hear us bear witness to Himself now during this time

of His rejection. He said,

Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God {Luke 12:8}.

We show our attachment, interest, and friendship by confessing Him. Mark, it does not say confessing religion, or confessing a creed, or confessing denominational distinction, but confessing Christ --

Whosoever shall confess Me.

And this is so precious to the Lord Himself, that He says He will confess such before the angelic hosts in heaven. Oh the blessedness of thus being reconciled to God! Every question of sin and guilt cleared, every fear removed, all the accusings of conscience having been met for us for ever on righteous, holy grounds, by the precious blood of Christ! And now, born again and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, in the hope of being caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His coming, what a real delight to our hearts it often is to take our place as His friends! May e help us in this yet more and more!

“Not half His love can I express;
Yet, Lord, with joy my lips confess,
This blessed portion I possess,
O Lamb of God, in Thee!

“Thy precious name it is I bear,
In Thee I am to God brought near,
And all the Father’s love I share,
O Lamb of God, in Thee!

“And when I in Thy likeness shine,
The glory and the praise be Thine,
That everlasting joy is mine,
O Lamb of God, in Thee!”

But how unutterably dark is the contrast of being an *enemy* to God and to Christ! What did Jesus say of such?

He that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God {Luke 12:9}.

Oh, how solemn for Jesus to disown any connection with that person! Not only to say to such,

I know you not Matt. 25:12},

but to say of such before the myriads of holy angelic hosts in heaven, “I know him not.” Professor he might have been, a celebrated theologian, or an ecclesiastical dignitary of exalted position on earth, but never reconciled to God by the death of His Son; still in his sins, with all his orthodoxy, theological acquirements, or ecclesiastical elevation, the solemn words must inevitably fall from the lips of Jesus, “I know you not”; and He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. Not all the luxury, safe custody, or power, of the most costly, most elaborate palace on earth, can keep the mightiest of royal personages from falling under the iron rod of the Son of God when He thus reigns; for we are told that

He shall strike through kings in the day of His wrath {see Psa. 110:5}.

No shams will avail then, no earth-born security can hide a soul from being detected and brought under the righteous sway of Jesus then; for He will be manifested as

the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords

{1 Tim. 6:15}.

Each person, high or low, bond or free, will then be judged according to the rule of righteousness.

He shall judge among the heathen, He shall fill the places with the dead bodies (Psa. 110:6).

And yet how few seem to believe such divine statements! It only shews how earnestly people may cling to a creed, because they have either inherited it, or adopted it as their own, without ever seriously considering its import. For instance, if you put before some people such Scriptures as those which unquestionably set forth the reign of the Lord Jesus executing His righteous vengeance upon living people, you will be often met by the reply, "I do not believe that Christ is coming again personally and visibly to act like this on the earth." And yet they often repeat as a part of their creed that "He will come to judge the *quick* and the dead." The word "quick," as many know, is an old English word which means "living." But when people read in Scripture that Jesus will judge the *quick* and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom (2 Tim. 4:1), or repeat as part of their accustomed creed, "I believe that He will judge the *quick* and the dead," who really believes the words they read or utter? And yet nothing can be more clearly set forth in Scripture, and that over and over again, than that the Lord will sit on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens TILL His enemies be made His footstool, and that He will come forth in flaming fire, and every eye shall see Him; that He will

strike through kings in the day of His wrath, judge among the heathen, fill the places *with the dead bodies* {Psa. 110:5, 6}.

Moreover, at that time, according to Rev. 19 and other Scriptures, He will find the beast at the climax of his antichristian wickedness in league with the false prophet, whom the Lord will at once slay with the spirit of His mouth, and destroy with the brightness of His coming. This may be implied by the words,

He shall wound the heads over many countries (Psa. 110:6).

Sure it is that in those fearful judgments the blessed Son of man, unto whom all judgment is committed, will be executing the will of God, and in this scene of unparalleled desolation will find communion and refreshment:

He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head (Psa. 110:7).

How very solemn this is, and yet how clear and distinct is the warning note!

The wrath to come {Luke 3:7, 1 Thess. 1:10}

is fearful indeed; and, knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Happy are those who are now turned from enemies to friends, by being reconciled to God by the death of His Son; for be assured that God hath highly exalted that blessed One, who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. And it is His determinate purpose and counsel, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven, in earth, and under the earth (the infernal regions), and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Remember, dear friends, that Jesus is now at God's right hand, crowned with glory and honor. There He will sit until His enemies be made His footstool. And never forget that in this awful scene He will shew no respect of persons; for He will reign in *righteousness* -- not mercy, but righteousness; and that He must reign till He hath put *all* enemies under His feet.

Death, Life, And Glory

Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:3, 4).

We can scarcely fail to be struck with the decided and unmistakable plainness of these brief but important sentences. There is no “if,” or “but,” or condition of any kind. The statements are clear and absolute; and the question which at once forces itself upon the mind is, To whom were those divinely-inspired words sent? The answer is supplied by the second verse of the first chapter:

To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse {Col. 1:2}.

We can easily see how impossible it would be to address such soul-comforting language to the inhabitants generally of an idolatrous city. We therefore find that the persons to whom this blessed epistle was written were those in that city who were “in Christ.” The first verse shows that

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God {Col. 1:1},

was the inspired writer; and the second verse, that the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse were the persons addressed.

It is remarkable too that Paul had not seen them. We can easily understand a spiritual servant of the Lord Jesus saying of persons with whom he was personally and intimately acquainted, “I fully expect that such and such persons will be in glory”; but to write in such a positive and decided style to persons he had never seen, needs some explanation. The reason of his thus writing was that he had heard, through a faithful servant of the Lord who had been laboring among them, that they not only professed to be Christians, but that they manifested the two cardinal points of Christianity,

faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints (see Col. 1:4).

He declared also to the apostle their love in the Spirit (Col. 1:8).

It need scarcely be added that these activities of soul are never found in the natural man, and can be produced only by a divine work. There may be, on the one hand, much natural amiability and generous and self-denying ministry to others, without any knowledge of Christ; on the other hand, there may be a boastful faith which can remove mountains, without any sense of the love of God in Christ. But when the apostle heard of their faith in Christ Jesus, and of their love to the brethren, he was led, by the Spirit, unhesitatingly to assure them of their present standing and blessings, and of the certainty of their being with Christ in glory.

Moreover, we know that

faith worketh by *love* {see Gal. 5:6}.

They always go together; for they are both the fruit of the same Spirit. A man may *say* that he has faith; but if love to the Lord and His saints be wanting, he would only be a dead professor; for

he that *loveth not* knoweth not God {1 John 4:8},
and

he that *loveth not* his brother abideth in death {1 John 3:14}.

But it is impossible that Christ Himself should be the object of our trust, without the heart being attracted by His love; for it is His love to us which commands our confidence in Him:

We love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

And have not many of us in former years, when in soul-distress, had our hearts assured and comforted with those precious words:

We know that we have passed from death unto life, *because we love the brethren* {1 John 3:14}?

In John 5:24 we are taught that those who *believe* have passed from death unto life;

and, as we have just seen from another Scripture, that those who *love* have passed from death unto life. Thus

faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints {see Col. 1:4},

are the two cardinal activities of vital Christianity; so that when the apostle had credible testimony that persons were at Colosse in whom this precious fruit of the Spirit was manifested, he recognized such a divine work in their souls, that he was able to write definitely to them,

Ye are dead (or have died), and your life is hid with Christ in God {Col. 3:3}.

Now what are we to understand by our being dead, or having died, and then as having life? for observe the order is not according to nature, that of life and death, but death first, then life. And this surely is very significant. In the previous chapter, they are spoken of as having been

dead in their sins, and in the uncircumcision of their flesh {see Col. 2:13},

which is no doubt the morally bad condition of every one naturally; afterwards the same people are said to be

dead with Christ {Col. 2:20},

which is certainly true of every believer. It is the latter point which is taken up in the text we are considering; for they had been “dead in sins,” but now they are

dead to sin {Rom. 6:2},

or “dead with Christ.” Thus were they all not only sinners, but

such sinners by nature as to be entirely destitute of spiritual life; but now, having received Christ Jesus the Lord as their Savior, it is their blessing to know that they have died with Christ, and are alive in Him who is the Head of all principality and power.

When the Holy Ghost works effectually in souls, He, being the Spirit of truth, must necessarily expose in us what is evil, as well as present to us the wondrous way in which the grace of God has met our need in Christ. It is the guilt of sins committed which almost always troubles souls at first: their consciences are burdened by being convicted as offenders against God. Their relief is immense when they know that all their sins were borne by Jesus, and that He suffered for them on the cross. But often, after this, their distress is deeper than ever, because they discover such evil thoughts, pride, and lust working within, as to force them eventually to conclude, that in them, that is in their flesh, dwells no good. When first they received the Lord Jesus as their Savior, and realized that God had given them remission of sins through faith in His name, they set out on an entirely new path of obedience to the word of God, and flattered themselves that they would never more be distressed about sin. But this is not the case. It is what *they are*, what they find *within*, rather than what they have done, which so troubles them now; finding in them what they hate, what they disallow, still active, which they resolve against and struggle against, but cannot obtain victory over. Spite of all their efforts and resolves, a trifle is often enough to stir up its loathsome activities. They fight against it, pray against it, redouble their efforts, make a thousand resolutions, and vainly try to overcome its manifold workings; but all their endeavors seem so powerless, that, almost in despair, they look for deliverance outside themselves, and cry out,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}.

We find that it was early in man's history that the divine verdict came forth as to the springs of evil in his heart. God declared that

the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man were *only evil*, and that continually {see Gen. 6:5}.

This is God's estimate of man's nature; showing the thorough depravity of every spring of thought in his heart. Consequently, the next words are,

I will destroy {Gen. 6:5};

for if man is only by nature a child of wrath, incurably bad, what else could be done with him, but to put him under the judgment of a holy God? and this judicial sentence was actually carried out by the flood. Years and even centuries passed over after this, man having been instructed and tested in various ways, when the prophet Jeremiah is heard to sound a somewhat similar note in saying,

The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked {see Jer. 17:9}.

A long series of years, and wonderful interventions of God, again pass over, and we find the Son of God from heaven declaring to His hearers at Capernaum the humiliating truth that

the flesh profiteth nothing {John 6:63},

and that

out of the heart of man proceedeth all manner of evil {see Mark 7:21}.

But neither the Lord's own ministry, nor that of the apostles, improved man's *nature*; so that again an inspired apostle pronounces him as wilful and insubject as ever, saying,

The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God {1 Cor. 2:14}

and that

the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:7, 8).

All these Scriptures show that God's estimate of the natural man is that he is thoroughly undone and corrupt, yea, incurably bad; and this is no doubt why the gospel does not propose to help or improve man in the flesh, says nothing about mending an evil nature; but, on the contrary, sets forth in the most absolute way his need of redemption and life. Thus the blessed gospel declares what God is to man, and what He has done for man; it is therefore concerning His beloved Son; for He having been delivered up for our sin and guilt to the death of the cross, God has graciously provided for us, not only in the judgment of sins, but of the nature too from whence our evil thoughts and desires proceed.

We therefore read in Rom. 6 that

our old man (not our sins, but our old man) has been crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6).

This is clearly not our transgressions, but the nature that did the sins -- our old man -- thus substitutionally and judicially put to death --

crucified with Christ.

God has done this, in His rich sovereign grace, in giving His own Son to be made sin for us, as our substitute, to answer under divine judgment for the evil of our old Adam nature, on whom He

condemned sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}.

Thus when Christ was crucified we were crucified with Him; so that when Christ died, we died. We therefore read in Col. 2 of our being

dead with Christ {Col. 2:20}.

And it is when the soul receives in faith this testimony of God, he realizes at once that he is delivered from the guilt arising from the workings of this evil nature -- the old man. Though the believer is still painfully sensible that the flesh is in him (and no one who is not born of God is), yet his comfort is, and victory also, that it has been judicially and righteously set aside by death, in the death of Christ his substitute. And though, when looking within, such painful discoveries are made as to compel him to cry out,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}

yet, turning back to Calvary, he finds his question immediately answered in the death of Christ as his substitute; so that he

praises God, and says,

I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 7:25}.

This is our power also over this evil nature; for as long as we are reckoning it *living*, and therefore resolving against it, we are ignoring what God has really done for us concerning it in the cross of Christ, and are not dealing with the old man as *dead*. A truth, the importance of which can scarcely be overrated, by which the believer is enjoined to have so completely done with self as to reckon himself to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 6:11). When this is really the case, we cannot be self-occupied, or self-confident; but having done with it, knowing it has been most righteously judged, and set aside by God in the cross of Christ, we are in perfect peace about it, find victory over it, and are free to look to the Lord for everything. The practical difficulty is to go on continually reckoning ourselves to have died unto sin, while at the same time we feel its terrible workings within. But this is our faith; for as it is not actually taken from us, but still in us, faith must reckon according to God's word and Christ's work, for it knows it has been really judged in our Substitute. While therefore we read in Rom. 8,

Ye are not in the flesh {Rom. 8:9},

but

in Christ Jesus {Rom. 8:1},

we are told in the previous chapter that the flesh is in us --

In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing {Rom. 7:18}.

Both are true. As to *standing*, we are not in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus; but as to *fact*, the flesh, in which is nothing good, is in us. Our old man is crucified with Christ, and we are dead; we are therefore not to recognize it, not to trust it, have no resources in it, but to treat it as dead -- to know that we have died with Christ.

But we have LIFE; for we are in Christ, who is our life; we are alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. A risen Christ, who is the other side of death, is our life; we have therefore resurrection-life, a life that lives beyond the region of death. It is not a prolonged natural life, but spiritual life; not life for a time, but for ever -- eternal life; for, as we are told here, *Christ is our life*. It is a life therefore inseparable from a risen Christ, a glorified Savior, who has triumphed over the grave and Satan and death for us, after having answered in justice and righteousness for all our sin and guilt. This is life indeed, as imperishable as Christ Himself; for He is our life. This could not have been an actual fact till after the death of Jesus; for He tells us so. He said,

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).

Thus it is perfectly clear that the death of Christ was actually necessary to be accomplished before others could be associated with Him. Prior to His death He was solitary and alone, loving others intensely, ministering to them unceasingly; but until He died He was alone. Life in Him, union with Him, as precious realities, could not be, then, till after His death, and therefore

in resurrection and ascension. Precious truth indeed for our hearts! for we are told now as a positive fact for present joy and strength, not only that we have died, but that we have life:

Your life is hid with Christ in God {Col. 3:3}.

If we remember the gracious words of our adorable Lord, we must be aware that His great object in coming was to give us this life. He said,

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

Now what could this more abundant life mean but this spiritual life, risen life, we are now considering? It is life in the Spirit, life in Christ, eternal life, which God now gives to every one that believeth. We find, therefore, in John's first epistle, that one object which he had in writing it was, that they might know that they have eternal life.

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life {1 John 5:13}.

It would seem that some believers in the apostle's day did not know that they had the present possession of eternal life: and how few appear to know it and enjoy it in our day! He therefore had it laid on his heart by God the Holy Ghost to write so plainly about it, that all believers might know as a present fact that they have eternal life. He tells them also that it is a free gift of God, and that it is in Christ. He says,

He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son {1 John 5:10}.

This shows the terrible profanity of the unbeliever; for God speaks, and he will not believe what God says. He then tells us what God publishes for men to believe. He says,

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son (1 John 5:10-13).

Here two things are set before us; first, that eternal life is God's *gift* in rich and free mercy, as we elsewhere read,

The gift of God is eternal life through (or in) Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 6:23};

and secondly, that

this life *is in* His Son {1 John 5:11};

that is, in Him who is risen and ascended, as our text sets forth:

When *Christ, who is our life*, shall appear {Col. 3, 4}.

It is not merely that He has given us the present possession of eternal life -- true, most blessedly true, as it is -- but that this life is risen-life, and not separated from Christ Himself; for Christ is our life. Oh, how blessed this is! while he that believeth on Him *hath* everlasting life, yet that this life *is in His Son*; so while we look up into the face of the Lord Jesus in the glory, and know Him as our life, yet that same life being in us, we can assuredly say that Christ liveth in us. Our life is therefore so bound up with the Son of God, that it is further said:

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life {1 John 5:12}.

No words can more plainly or positively express a truth so

eternally solemn and vital.

We have thus seen, from the teaching of Scripture, that the believer has died with Christ, and is risen with Christ; that his present standing is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, in Christ; that he has life, new life, risen-life, in Christ; that not in the flesh, and not of the world, all his springs and resources are in Him who is his life. Practical Christian life, therefore, consists in drawing all we need from Christ, living upon Him, and looking to Him for every thing; hence the apostle says,

The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

The hope therefore of such, and we may add certainty too, is *glory*.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then *shall ye also appear with Him in glory* {Col. 3:4}.

What assurance and confidence this inspired language imparts! Could a more decided mode of expression be used? It reminds us of our blessed Lord's saying, that

every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and *I will raise him up at the last day* {John 6:40};

for it connects the present possession of everlasting life with the certain enjoyment of future glory. And how could it possibly be otherwise? for if Christ, who is in the glory, be our life, how could He come forth in manifested glory without us? Nor is there such a thought in His loving heart; for we are sure from His own lips that He desires to have us with Him where He is. Oh the unspeakable blessedness of the hope of glory! To see His face, be with Him, and like Him, and then to come forth in manifested glory with Him, when the world will certainly know that the Father has loved us as He has loved Jesus, all to the praise of the glory of His grace, what more could we wish? That the world will see us in glory with the Lord Jesus there can be no doubt; for the sons of God will be *manifested*. That they will see the Lord Jesus is certain; for

behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him {Rev. 1:7}.

They will not glorify and admire us, but glorify and admire Him who has so loved us, and brought us to share His glory, They will not say then what a wonderful saint that was, but what a wonderful Christ! what amazing grace God has displayed! for

the Lord will be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, to execute vengeance, . . . when He shall come to be glorified *in* His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe {2 Thess. 1:7-10}.

Now He is glorified *by* His faithful ones; then He will be glorified *in* them. I need not say this appearing of the Lord, and our manifestation with Him, follows our having been caught up to meet Him in the air. It is public manifestation; and, blessed be God, it is a fact, whether we know its power and comfort or not, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory.

Abraham Offering Up Isaac

Genesis 22

This was a remarkable trial of Abraham's faith. He had often been tested before, but not in this way. He had been tried by famine in the land, and failed by going down into Egypt. He had been sorely tried in family rule by being obliged to turn Ishmael out of the house. He had waited for many years in his old age for the fulfilment of the divine promise to give him a son, and, hoping against hope, accounted that God was able to perform what He had promised; so, after he had patiently endured, he received the child Isaac as God's precious and peculiar gift. But time passed on. Isaac grew up. For many years he had been the delight of fond and godly parents, and most unexpectedly the aged patriarch was called upon to give him back to God -- to surrender this gift which His own sovereign mercy had bestowed. And, strange to say, in this severest trial his faith and obedience most blessedly shine forth. The reason of this, no doubt, was, that the trial met him when in communion with God. The emergency found him calling on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God, at Beersheba, as the concluding verses of the preceding chapter shew; so that when God called he had no question to settle, no errors to set right, no matters for self-judgment to delay him; but when God said,

Abraham,

his immediate reply was,

Here I am {Gen. 22:1}.

Let us not fail to gather from this that God may call upon us to give back to Him what we may least expect; for if He bestows gifts, is it not that we should hold them in entire subjection to His will? And happy indeed is it for those who day by day hold the blessings of God in His hands, so that when He calls for them we may be at once ready to yield them up. The moment we tenaciously grasp any of God's gifts as our own they become sources of care, and expose us to the governmental dealings of God. But to hold all God's gifts so entirely in the hands of the gracious Giver, as to leave them continually at His own disposal, is the surest way of enjoying and retaining the comfort of them,

On no account, let us forget the great importance of the state of soul in which the trial finds us. If it occur when we are occupied with self, or taken up with circumstances, or in a careless and unjudged walk, we shall be quite unprepared for the trial of our faith; so that instead of responding to the will of God, and quietly going through it with God, self-will, pride, fretfulness, and rebellion may be manifested. Even a small trial then seems too much for us, and may call for the settlement of questions of conscience by self-judgment and confession, before being able calmly to consider the matter in the presence of God. On the other hand, if the trial find us happy in God's presence, in the spirit of worship and thanksgiving, dwelling on the perfectness of divine love to us,

enjoying His favor, then we unhesitatingly (however painful to nature) own the claims of God to be paramount and best, and peacefully bow to His will in child-like obedience and confidence. Let us not fail, then, to learn the lesson here set before us of the vast importance of our abiding in the Lord Jesus, and of habitually enjoying the privileges and blessings God has graciously given to us in Him.

But it was with Abraham as it is sometimes with us, that God tried his faith in a way that he never could have expected. Isaac was a son specially given to Abraham by divine promise in his old age; could he then possibly have anticipated that he would one day be suddenly called upon to give him back to God, by offering him up as a burnt-offering? Again, all the promises of God, both as to his descendants and the nations, were given in Isaac:

In Isaac shall thy seed be called {Gen. 21:12, Heb. 11:18};

and

in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed {Gen. 22:18}.

Can it then be possible that God would have this one put to death? But the hoary-headed patriarch asks no questions. He knows that God's calls are imperative, and that His word must be implicitly obeyed; and when the man of faith was thus occupied with God, and accounting that He was able to raise him up again from the dead, he was strengthened at once to arise and obey every detail of direction for the accomplishment of His will. He knew that God is faithful, that He could not deny Himself, that the counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, and in some way or other all His own promises must be fulfilled. As on the occasion of Isaac's birth,

he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform {Rom. 4:20, 21};

so now He could go forth,

accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead {Heb. 11:19}.

It was reckoning then entirely upon the faithfulness and almighty power of God, that enabled the heavy-hearted patriarch to go forth, step by step, according to the divine command in this time of deep affliction. The trial finding him as it did occupied with God, calm and happy in His presence, he went forth looking to God, walking step by step, and day by day, according to His bidding, believing that if his beloved Isaac were bound to the altar and killed, and consumed to ashes as a burnt-offering, that He was able to raise him up from the dead, and establish all His promises in him. This was the way of faith; hence we are told,

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac,

&c. {Heb. 11:17}.

It was not reckoning upon any arm or stratagem of the flesh, not brooding over circumstances, painful, most painful to nature as they must have been, but having to do with God, the living and true God. No doubt he felt his own weakness, and his feelings must have been acutely sensitive, every emotion of affection too put to its utmost stretch; but all this only the more earnestly cast him unreservedly upon God, and, like another, he might say,

My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever {Psa. 73:26};

or again,

Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him {Job 13:15},
for faith knows no other resource or confidence.

Oh the blessedness of thus holding all our blessings in faith, at the sovereign disposal of the Giver of every good and perfect gift! Then we shall have to do with God, and take all from Him, and, confiding in His perfect and changeless love, our song will be --

“Take what Thou wilt, we’ll ne’er repine;
E’en as the branches to the vine
Our souls will cling to Thee.”

Thus we confide in God in the time that seems to us most perilous; every murmur is hushed, and fretfulness dare not intrude upon the scene. We can

in every thing give thanks {1 Thess. 5:18};

we bless the Lord at all times, and have His praise continually on our lips --

“We praise Him for all that is past,
And trust Him for all that’s to come.”

But this cannot be the case if our hearts are not really stayed upon God, and our souls kept consciously and happily in His blessed presence. How often, alas! instead of this, when trials of faith come, they serve rather to waken us up to a sense of our own carnality, worldliness, and carelessness of walk, and drive us to self-judgment and humiliation before God, instead of manifesting the calm dignity of a faithful servant, and in quietness of soul saying,

Behold, here I am {Gen. 22:1}.

With Abraham, as we have noticed, there were no questions of walk and conduct to be settled when he was called by God. He was ready at once to hear and attend to the divine directions, which were:

Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of {Gen. 22:2}.

How totally unexpected such a command must have been! How very solemn! With what point must these words have penetrated into the deepest recesses of the heart of this aged man of faith! A man of like passions with ourselves, whose very heart-strings were entwined around his precious Isaac, he stands before God, hearkens to these thrilling words, so calculated to make every fibre of his earthly tabernacle quiver, and unhesitatingly bows to Him; for he knows the Judge of all

the earth must do right. Without a reply, a murmur, or uttering even a question, conscious that God’s word must be implicitly carried out at all costs, he obeys. We are told that

Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him {Gen. 22:3}.

Thus we see the obedience of faith acting, as it always does, in strict subjection to the word of God. He travels along the road so plainly marked out for him day and night, with Isaac and his servants; and it was not until the third day that he first caught sight in the distance of the place where this most solemn and affecting scene was to be enacted. Then, as he had received no command from God to take any one with him to Moriah’s mount but Isaac his son, he bade the servants to tarry there with the ass until they returned. He

said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you {Gen. 22:5}.

Then Abraham, having laid the wood upon Isaac, took fire in his hand, and a knife, and they went both of them together. The father and his only son thus went on side by side together, until they reached

the place which God had told him of {Gen. 22:9}.

This must have been a terrible moment for the father of the faithful. But he had often proved the goodness and faithfulness of God; and distressing and unintelligible as all this at this moment may have been to him, yet he could trust God, and act according to His own word, assured that the path of obedience must be the path of blessing. Accordingly, Abraham first builds an altar; then he lays the wood in order, making it ready to consume the sacrifice; after this, he takes the darling of his heart, his precious Isaac, into his arms, and having bound him, laid him, as he would another sacrifice, on the altar upon the wood. And now the trying moment has fully come; neither parental feelings nor reasonings can rule now. The word of God was plain, and He claims obedience at all costs. The aged patriarch yields himself wholly unto God; he makes no reserve. He knew that God meant what He said; he is therefore in real earnest. The knife is at hand, and the fire ready to consume to ashes this only son whom he loved. We are told that

Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son {Gen. 22:10}.

But this is far enough for God. The patriarch’s faith had been tested, and its reality proved. He had to do with God; a voice therefore calls out of heaven, to stop his uplifted arm from actually plunging the knife into the heart of his beloved son. He hears from heaven,

Abraham, Abraham;

and he said,

Here am I {Gen. 22:11};

and having thus turned to God, he hears the divine command:

Lay *not* thine hand upon the lad: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me {Gen. 22:12}.

Thus Abraham proves again the goodness and faithfulness of God, and, like another could say,

he had seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (see James 5:11).

It must indeed have been a joyous moment to the heart of Abraham as he loosed his son, and received him to his welcome bosom again as one raised from the dead. It was more than deliverance in respect of being saved from the unutterable pain of inflicting the fatal blow on his only and much-loved son; for he had also the consolation that God, who had tried him, had found him faithful; and he also had the testimony in his conscience that in obeying the truth at all costs he had pleased God. It was perhaps the happiest time he had ever known; for the angel called to Abraham out of heaven the second time, and said,

By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies (referring to Israel's future blessings); and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (referring to Gentiles); because thou hast obeyed My voice (Gen. 22:15-18).

Thus the blessing of God, not only to himself, but to many, many others, is connected with his faithfulness to His own word. All, no doubt, will be established through the Seed, Christ; but we can surely gather for ourselves the profitable lesson, that if we are obedient to the word of the Lord at all costs, whatever trial it may entail, it will secure God's approval, and His blessing, both to ourselves and others.

Before looking at the typical instruction which this marvelous scene sets forth, the obedience of Isaac calls for a few remarks. Abraham is specially spoken of by the Holy Ghost as an example of family rule according to God:

I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him (Gen. 18:19).

Nor is Scripture wanting in charming examples of the family order and piety of the father of the faithful; enough surely is recorded to show that real godliness should be manifested in every department of our social as well as public life. Where family piety is wanting, we may be sure there is little if any piety elsewhere. It is easy for the natural man to be either religious or irreligious before men; but the life of faith always (not sometimes, but always) has to do with God. So it was with Abraham, and so it is with every true believer now. We cannot doubt the aged patriarch's loving attachment to Sarah. No one can survey the touching scene on the plains of Mamre, when heavenly visitors suddenly arrived at the tent door in the heat of the day, without seeing what true conjugal love and confidence subsisted between Sarah and her lord. After offering hospitality to these unknown but welcome visitors, Abraham ran at once to Sarah to bake cakes for them on the hearth, while, almost at the same moment, he commanded a servant to dress a calf which his master had selected for the

entertainment of his guests. We are told that

the young man hasted to dress it {see Gen. 18:7}.

And we cannot doubt that Sarah, who is held up as an example to Christian wives, was delighted to help in thus carrying out her husband's desires to entertain their heavenly visitors. But as obedience and reverence are not the only qualities of a pious wife, so the Holy Ghost has carefully noted down for our admiration and profit that she was Abraham's helpmeet also. When Ishmael was mocking the child of promise, she evidently discerned the evil when Abraham did not, and knew better than he the will of God about it. And, though consciously in advance of her husband on this point, she did not move out of her own proper sphere to act upon it, but put it before him whom she reverently owned as lord, and waited for him to fulfil his own responsibility as ruler of the household. We are told that

Sarah *saw* the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking. Wherefore *she said unto Abraham*, Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac. And the thing was *very grievous in Abraham's sight* because of his son. And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; *in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice*; for in Isaac shall thy seed be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is thy seed (Gen. 21:9-13).

The result, we know, was, that Abraham sent her and her child away. Thus we see Sarah, in her character of helpmeet, as knowing the Lord's mind concerning him who was heir according to the promise of God. About this she was exercised before God; and a wife, though a Christian, lamentably fails to fill the place allotted to her in the wisdom of God, if she lacks exercise of soul before Him as to carrying out His will in the family circle, even though there be a goodly measure of subjection and reverence manifested.

As we have noticed, Abraham is commended of God for ruling his own servants and children. We have seen in chapter 18 how readily the young man obeyed him; and, when approaching mount Moriah, the young men were commanded to tarry there with the ass until they came to them again, and verse 19 shows how obedient they were to their master's bidding. The filial subjection of Isaac, the much-loved and only son, is also remarkably set forth. Though burdened with the pile of wood necessary for consuming a burnt-offering, he freely converses with his father, saying,

Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering? {Gen. 22:7}

and seemed satisfied at being told,

My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering {Gen. 22:8}.

All this shows filial confidence and love; so that when the moment arrived, he bows to his father's command to be laid on the wood, and bound to the altar as a burnt-offering. But all these points show the family piety which marked Abraham's household. The secret of power and blessing, no doubt, was his own personal walk before God, whom he knew to be his

shield and his exceeding great reward {Gen. 15:1}.

The typical instruction of this portion of divine truth has been frequently noticed. It is perhaps the only type we have in Scripture of God giving His only-begotten Son, delivering Him up for us all. And though He spared Abraham's parental feelings, He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him for our offences, and forsook Him in His deepest agony upon the cross, because our sins were upon Him. No doubt there is significance in the expression,

They (the father and the son) went both of them together {Gen. 22:6},

while the servants were at the foot of the mountain; for in that unparalleled scene on Calvary, the transaction was between God and His only-begotten Son. They were together, and none else than those can ever fathom the mystery of God's just condemnation of sin as then and there took place. But though God spared the patriarch's feelings, the ram caught in the thicket was really offered upon that altar *instead of Isaac*; and when Abraham loosed his son from the altar, he received him as alive from the dead, and thus he became a type of Jesus risen. The typical instruction, moreover, is so accurately maintained that we do not see Isaac after he is loosed from the altar of burnt-offering till he comes forth again to meet his bride. And further, the record between these two events, which so strikingly portray Christ risen, ascended, and coming, remarkably sets forth almost all the leading elements at work in the world, both spiritually and temporally considered, from the resurrection of Christ to His coming to meet His bride in the air.

First of all, let us look at this marvelous scene dispensationally. After the offering up and resurrection of the only son, in a figure, Sarah dies; i.e. God's blessing to the Jews in the way of promise dies, the kingdom is tendered by Peter (Acts 3), and the death of Stephen (Acts 7) shuts the door to Israel's blessing in that way. We see also the Holy Ghost (typified by Eleazar, Abraham's servant) is sent forth to select a bride for the Heir of all things, the

only Son {Gen. 22:2, 12}

who had been on the altar of burnt-offering; and his mission is so successful in carrying out the father's will that he wins a bride for Isaac through his report of him, and leaves her not until he conducts her to the bridegroom's embrace, who during this time is occupied in intercession (Gen. 24:63-67). After this, the natural descendants of Abraham, the children of Israel, are again brought upon the scene; getting blessing through Abraham, it is true, but Isaac pre-eminent among them as the risen one and heir of all things (Gen. 25:1-15).

Then observe, during this period the world goes on its course (Gen. 23). There is death, burial, getting a grave to bury the dead out of their sight; there is also buying and selling, courtesy, kindness, and liberality too; but all is of the world, and not of the Father. Amidst it all we see the man of faith, the man that had not only been associated with the sacrifice, but with the risen one, who knew God as the Raiser of the dead, and thus disclosed to him a scene out of and beyond this region altogether. The man of faith, therefore, rises so superior to every thing here, that his bold confession

before men is,

I am a stranger and a sojourner
and all I want here is a grave to

bury my dead out of my sight {Gen. 23:4};
and even that I cannot accept as a gift, but will pay the true price for. This is a noble confession.

I am a stranger;

I am not one of you; and do not desire, with all your possessions, rank, or courtesy, to be reckoned with you; for I do not belong to this scene. I am a sojourner -- only here for a little while; how long or short I know not. It may be the next hour may bring commands from God to go elsewhere. This is his confession before men, and therefore he could afford to be kind and courteous, and weigh out to the sons of Heth four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant, for the field in Machpelah for a possession of a burying-place.

Thus we find blessed lessons of instruction as to trial of faith, family piety, as well as typical instruction concerning the person of Christ, His accomplished work, the ways of God in different dispensations, and the true place here of those who are associated with Christ risen, and waiting for His return from heaven. The remarkable accuracy with which these typical lines have been drawn, seems enough to bow the stoutest infidel to the acknowledgment of their divine authorship; while the believer, who walks in the bright shining light of the New Testament Scriptures, cannot but be filled with joy and comfort, in tracing the unmistakable ministry of Him who knows the end from the beginning.

Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world {Acts 15:18}.

Grace, Government, And Glory

Grace and glory are God's gifts.

Jehovah,

said the psalmist,

will give grace and glory {Psa. 84:11}.

Being now saved by grace, through faith, we wait for glory; for Jesus said,

The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them {John 17:22}.

Now God is sending forth the gospel of His grace, by which He calls those who believe unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus; and when we are in the glory, we shall ever be to the praise of the glory of His grace.

It is because we are objects of His abundant grace, and soon to be partakers of the glory, that we are necessarily objects of His government and care. If an ancient prophet said,

The Lord will judge His people {Psa. 135:14},

an inspired apostle also enquires,

What son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? {Heb. 12:7}.

An earthly father does not discipline other people's children, but he does his own, and because they are his own. So, because we are now by grace children of God, and predestined to be thus before Him in love in eternal glory, He does of necessity exercise parental discipline and correction, and that because we are His. It is well, then, to be instructed in the Lord's mind about these things, otherwise we shall be ignorant of His ways, and have hard thoughts of God at the time we ought to be giving thanks, when, by some humbling process, He is either preparing us for the reception of further blessing, or delivering us from false refuges and carnal confidence. By such wrong thoughts the Lord is dishonored, His Spirit grieved, and our souls damaged, because we judge of the Lord's dealings with us according to sense, instead of by the light of His own revelation of Himself and His ways in the Scriptures. When rightly occupied with Him in time of trial, we may say with another --

“Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
With blessings on your head.

“*Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,*
But trust Him for His grace:
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.”

The history of Jacob furnishes us with remarkable illustrations of the three subjects we propose now to consider -- Grace, Government, and Glory. The illustrations may be feeble, but they seem clear enough to set forth the importance of giving to each of them its distinctive place; for if this be not the case, we shall be mixing up in our minds present circumstances with our

hope of glory, and allowing feelings and desires to decide for us, instead of God's infallible word, whether we are objects of divine favor or not. Yet, all through Scripture, few subjects are more frequently or more distinctly brought out than Grace, Government, and Glory. May the Lord help us to consider, with reverence and godly fear, what His own word of eternal truth teaches about these things!

1. GRACE. -- The apostle Paul informs us that he owed all his blessings to divine grace.

By the grace of God I am what I am {1 Cor. 15:10};
and he also says,

The grace of God bringeth salvation {Titus 2:11}.

It therefore seeks lost, helpless, and sinful ones to display itself upon; and it brings salvation, nothing less than present and eternal salvation -- salvation *from* sins, death, judgment, Satan, and the world; and *unto* eternal glory, the redemption even of our bodies when Jesus comes. Such is grace. It makes no conditions, it brings everything, demands nothing, gives freely, suitably, everlastingly, thus securing endless praise and glory to God. We shall find this in its measure illustrated in Gen. 28. Jacob had proved himself to be a liar, deceiver, supplanter; and, as the fruit of his evil doings, he was now a fugitive, fleeing for his life from his brother Esau when God met with him. He was therefore justly exposed to severe punishment from the hand of God. Alone in his unhappy flight, stretched on the cold ground beneath the starry canopy of heaven, sleeping soundly on his stony pillows, with everything to condemn, and nothing to recommend him, God appeared to him in a dream. Without one upbraiding word, or asking a question of this sinful fugitive, He reveals Himself, in connection with the future glories of the kingdom, as the God of Abraham and of Isaac, and at once tells him how richly and abundantly He will bless him. He is assured not only that the vast blessings promised to Abraham and Isaac shall be continued to him, but it is added,

Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places
whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land;
for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have
spoken to thee of (Gen. 28:15).

This is grace. It is God lovingly revealing Himself to one wholly undeserving of any good thing, and giving freely and abundantly according to the good pleasure of His will; and, not only pouring out blessings, but making Jacob, the utterly unworthy receiver, personally an object of divine love and constant care. The secret of this way of blessing is no doubt found in the thrice-repeated words connected with the announcement of this grace, “Thy seed”; for the way of divine grace must always be through the “seed” -- Christ. Hence we read that

grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life *by*
Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21).

God is never gracious at the expense of truth or righteousness,

therefore in the cross of Christ we see both the exceeding riches of His grace to us, and His unsparing righteous judgment of our sins. In this way, God was glorified in justly condemning our sin, and is also glorified in saving us; for in the cross He was both just and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Grace flows freely to us, therefore, through Him who thus suffered for sins to bring us to God. Every claim of divine righteousness and holiness having been thus answered for by Christ on the cross, God is now faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Let us on no account forget the thrice-repeated "thy seed" in connection with Jacob's blessing.

Still the way of God with Jacob, blessed as it was, and serving to illustrate our subject, falls far short of the grace that has come to us. Not only were we practically wicked, opposed to God, and dead in trespasses and sins, when divine grace met us, but it brought us life, resurrection-life in Christ; so that we were quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Besides this, we are united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, made sons of God, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, who is in us the hope of glory. This is grace indeed. It is not only that Christ has freed us from sin and guilt, but He has also brought us into partnership with Himself in all that He is and has. No marvel, then, it is said that the grace of God bringeth salvation; for it is indeed a great salvation, bringing us present remission of sins, justification from all things, sanctification, new and eternal relationships, all through that one offering by which we have been perfected for ever; so that with fullest confidence we may wait and look for the Savior. It is divine grace; all is of God; it is His grace to us, free, unconditional, and eternal.

The *effects* of grace may also be noticed here. We read:

Jacob awaked out of his sleep. He said, Surely the Lord is in this place. . . . This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. . . . Jacob *rose up early*, took his stony pillow, set it up for a *pillar, poured oil upon it*, called the name of that place Beth-el (house of God), and said, This stone which I have set up for a pillar shall be God's house (see Gen. 28:16-22).

And so with us, divine grace brings such vast and eternal blessings, and so wholly undeserved, that it awakens hearts, makes us know that we are in the presence of God, exercises the conscience, and draws out our souls in worship. It brings us peace, comforts us with the sweet assurance that God is for us and not against us, and subdues and molds us to His own mind and will. It rouses our affections, quickens us into activity in His service, sets us in the posture of dependence, and bows us before God with adoring gratitude and praise. Oh, yes! --

"Grace taught our wandering feet
To tread the heavenly road;
And new supplies each hour we meet,
While traveling home to God.

"'Twas *Grace* that wrote each name
In Life's eternal book;
'Twas *Grace* that gave us to the Lamb,

Who all our sorrows took.

"Grace all the work shall crown
Through everlasting days;
It lays in heaven the topmost stone,
And well deserves the praise."

The grace of God to us in Christ, when received into the heart, must produce mighty effects. It cannot but attract us to Him who has so loved us, while it constrains us to do those things which are pleasing in His sight. As the apostle, by the Holy Ghost, so forcibly puts it,

It teaches us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, etc. {Titus 2:12-14}.

If then there be a question in the soul as to the true ground of peace, eternal salvation, or present power for service and walk, the *grace* of God to us in Christ is the answer; and being now so fully blessed in Christ risen and ascended, what could such marvelous grace teach us to look for, and wait for, but God's Son from heaven? Well may we sing --

"Oh, to grace how *great* a debtor
Daily we're constrained to be;
Let that *grace*, Lord, like a fetter,
Bind our wandering hearts to Thee!"

Jacob then, as we have noticed, was blessed of God at Bethel through His abundant grace; and in after years the patriarch needed to be reminded of this, and made again and again to feel the reality of his having been so blessed of God. When Laban dealt hardly with him, the angel of God said to him in a dream,

I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee. *I am the God of Bethel*, where thou anointedst the pillar, and where thou vowedst a vow unto Me: now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred (Gen. 31:12, 13).

On another occasion, when his heart had been well-nigh overwhelmed with family sorrow and humiliation,

God said unto Jacob, Arise, *go up to Bethel*, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, *that appeared unto thee where thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother* (Gen. 35:1).

Thus he was, directed to Bethel, and then, having erected an altar to God, to ponder His ways of grace toward Him. The children of Israel too were often reminded of how mercifully Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And so we are frequently instructed to consider Him, and to remember Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and, like the patriarch, to consider that the God of Bethel is our God, and that Bethel is the place we should visit, and consider His marvelous grace, and how richly and fully we are blessed. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, so that we may be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; and no doubt one of the most blessed offices of the Holy Ghost is thus to minister Christ, and testify of Him to our hearts. How sweet then are those precious instructions of God to His servant Jacob --

I am the God of Bethel;

and,

Arise, and go up to Bethel, and build there an altar, &c.

When we think of Jacob's course, and of the untiring mercy and goodness of God to him, is it any marvel that it is said,

Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help
(Psa. 146:5)?

Jacob, however, left Bethel, and went on his journey to the people of the east. Yet, on starting on his pilgrimage, so confident was he in his own resources, that he voluntarily determined to give to God a tenth, if only God would be as good as His word. A poor beginning indeed; and, if such self-confidence be fostered, must sooner or later call for governmental interference. Still he manages for himself for many years; only it may be that he hindered his own blessing by his habit of bargaining and contriving, instead of simply trusting in his God. Yet amidst all, God, faithful to His own word, was remarkably with him in all the places he went.

After twenty years, however, tidings suddenly reached Jacob that Esau was coming to meet him, and four hundred men with him. All along this period we have no record that Jacob had judged himself, and humbled himself before God, on account of his sin in regard to Esau. The consequence was, that, being conscience-stricken with the report of Esau's approach, he was

greatly afraid and distressed {Gen. 32:7}.

This was a searching moment. God knew how to reach the sore spot. It put Jacob fairly to the test, and was enough to make him manifest to himself and to others. Now let us look at this man of faith, so blessed of God, and yet so full of stratagem. What will he do? Observe his prayer. He cries to God about it, takes a low place before the God of Abraham and of Isaac, who had also spoken to and blessed him, and entreates Him to fulfil His own word in delivering him from Esau. Very good. What can be better? No doubt, if he had *begun* and *ended* here, his whole soul thus stayed upon God, all would have been well. But it was not so. He has such confidence in his own competency to manage the matter, that *before* he prayed unto God he resorted to a delivering contrivance of his own; and also, *after* his brief but orthodox prayer, he at once fled to his own inventions again. *Before* prayer, he divided the people with him, and the flocks, and herds, and camels, into two bands, and said,

If Esau come to the one company and smite it, then the other company shall escape {Gen. 32:8}.

This was his stratagem *before* prayer. It was the first thing he did. He tried to deliver himself without God; but thinking it might possibly fail, he made God his refuge too. Again, *after* his prayer, we are told that

he took of that which came to his hand *a present for Esau his brother*; two hundred she goats, and twenty he goats, two hundred ewes, and twenty rams, thirty milch camels with their colts, forty kine, and ten bulls, twenty she asses, and ten foals {Gen. 32:13-15}.

Then he arranged them to proceed in separate droves, with a space betwixt drove and drove {Gen. 32:16},

and commanded the foremost of his servants, when he met Esau, to say,

They be thy servant Jacob's; it is a present sent unto my lord Esau: and, behold, also he is behind us {Gen. 32:18}.

He commanded the second and third servant, and all that followed the droves, to speak to Esau in the same manner. Jacob also said,

I will appease him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me {Gen. 32:20}.

He appears greatly pleased with these carnal contrivances; and to complete the scheme, he sends his two wives, and two women servants, and eleven sons across the brook, and he himself carries behind (Gen. 32:22, 23).

Thus the state of Jacob's heart is fully manifested. He is a double-minded man, trusting in God in some sense, and relying on his own plodding and contrivances as well; and this was a time when God's governmental dealing was called into action to deliver His servant from these pernicious ways, and to make him somewhat sensible of the dignity and blessing into which God in His grace had brought him.

And here let us, dear Christian brethren, solemnly and unsparingly deal with ourselves as regards our own actings; for the day of trial will make manifest the crooked workings of carnal confidence, and the infidelity of carnal stratagems, if we are bringing them into requisition, instead of simply and only relying on the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be assured God loves us too well to encourage us in a course so destructive to our own real blessing, as alike dishonoring to Him. The bane of the present day is, that *policy*, even among Christians, is ranked side by side with *faith*. It was a saying of a godly young man, "*Policy* I hate; but *faithfulness* to God I love." Surely nothing is more clearly expressed in Scripture than that

without faith it is impossible to please God {Heb. 11:6}.

But this mixture of faith and contrivance is what is now before us, and which the truth so forcibly enjoins us to judge ourselves about. Being careful for nothing, and praying about everything, exercising faith in our gracious God who has raised up Christ from among the dead, is what He looks for, and that we should have *no confidence in the flesh*, its ability, resources, or righteousness. When this is the case we shall be single-eyed, and the language of our hearts will be,

My soul, wait thou *only* upon God; for my expectation is from Him (Psa. 62:5).

2. GOVERNMENT. -- Jacob had carried out all his contrivances, and was alone. We therefore read that

Jacob was left *alone*; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day (Gen. 32:24).

Here we see the governmental dealing of God with His double-minded servant. Observe, Jacob was left ALONE, and then the wrestling began. It was not, as many say, Jacob wrestling with God in order to obtain a blessing by his persevering efforts; but it is rather God wrestling with him, in order to teach Jacob that he is not so good and clever as he supposes himself to be. He was resisting God, and needed a mighty power to be put

forth to subdue him. Therefore it was that Jacob's unyielding spirit needed that

the hollow of his thigh should be touched, and put out of joint, as he wrestled with him (see Gen. 32:25).

We often hear Christians say God is greatly trying them, whereas the truth is that they are trying to God, resisting His guidance, and insubject to His will; and, like Jacob, at length need to be overcome by divine power.

Jacob is now fairly broken down. He is made to feel his thorough helplessness and entire dependence. His weakness now compels him to cling to the strong for strength, and he cleaves to the Blessor for blessing; so that when the mighty Wrestler said,

Let me go, for the day breaketh; he said unto him, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me {Gen. 32:26}.

It is no longer his own competency that fills Jacob's mind, but the resources of God; and what a vast change is produced! He now takes the place of a receiver instead of a contriver, and of drawing his blessings from another in the consciousness that he had no resources in himself. With thigh out of joint, he is made to feel his own real weakness, and so entirely dependent, that he only looks for blessing from another on the ground of his own helplessness, and not by his own planning.

But further. He learns also in the school of God his own vileness. Job, when brought into the presence of God, had to learn to abhor himself, Isaiah that he was undone and unclean, and Daniel that all his comeliness had turned to corruption. And the moment this mighty Wrestler enquired of Jacob,

What is thy name?

it touched the deepest springs of his heart, reached the secret workings of conscience, so that he was obliged to reply,

My name is Jacob {Gen. 32:27},

or supplanter; as much as to say, "I am vile, for I am a supplanter." Thus he learns during one night another salutary lesson. And all now who are under divine teaching, also learn that in the flesh is nothing good, but all manner of evil, and that it cannot be trusted. These things Jacob learns, as I have said, in the presence of God; for though the Wrestler appeared to him in the similitude of "a man," he afterwards owns that he is God; for he says,

I have seen *God* face to face, and my life is preserved (Gen. 32:30);

for surely none else could have so taught him that he was perfectly weak and thoroughly vile. In the sequel, he proved experimentally how entirely useless all his plans and stratagems were for appeasing Esau, and trying to escape his supposed anger, by taking up his own position in the rear of his long droves of cattle, his wives and children. The truth is that he had a bad conscience about Esau, and it happened to him according to the Scripture,

The wicked flee when no man pursueth {Prov. 28:1}.

But profit is always the end of God's discipline. He not only delivers from evil by exposing it to our view, and bowing our hearts before Him because of it, but He also in result gives positive blessing. It was so with Jacob. When he humbled

himself as a supplanter, (owning, as we judge it did, his previous wrong toward Esau,) God exalted him. When he clung in perfect weakness to the Blessor, he obtained blessing.

Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed {Gen. 32:28}.

Thus, in helplessness and self-abasement, vile in his own eyes, a supplanter, he was a prince in God's account, and in the place of power and blessing; prevailing with God in obtaining from Him, and prevailing too in divine strength (not by human contrivances) over men, whether Esau or others.

All this time, let us remember, Jacob is *alone*, learning salutary and lasting, though costly, lessons. His fancied comeliness had turned to corruption, and his competency had been proved to be capable only of insubjection to God. Instead of bowing *at once* to Him who wrestled with him, his persevering wilfulness during the night seemed to necessitate the painful process of having his thigh put out of joint, before he could take his true place of clinging to God for strength. But, when broken down and self-judged, it became at once the occasion for God to exalt His servant, and to encourage him in Himself. Blessed discipline! and somewhat illustrative of the apostle's words:

Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but *He for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness* (Heb. 12:6-10).

This is the activity of divine love in governmental care so as to make us partakers of further blessing. These ways of God often produce much exercise of soul; and though not pleasant at the time, nevertheless afterward, to such as are bowed before the Lord, it yields *the peaceable fruit of righteousness*.

Jacob learned lessons that night at Peniel which he never forgot, and, we may add, never lost the profit of. When he actually met Esau, it was only to prove the faithfulness of God to His own gracious word of promise,

I am with thee, and will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of {see Gen. 28:15}.

Instead of Esau killing him, as he had feared, we are told that

Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him: and they wept (Gen. 33:4).

After this they met at Isaac's funeral; for we read that

his sons Esau and Jacob buried him (Gen. 35:29).

Many a bitter trial Jacob had to pass through, and had need to think of Bethel, and the God of Bethel, and, halting on his thigh, he could never forget that night at Peniel. However, he was at length so conscious of his dignity and superiority, as being an object of God's gracious care and blessing, that he could courteously take the place of conferring blessing on the

greatest potentate on earth, and of bowing himself out of his presence.

Jacob blessed Pharaoh {Gen. 47:10}.

Instead of courting this royal person, or coveting anything from him, he now rightly felt his real superiority over those who know not God. When the king said unto Jacob,

How old art thou?

Jacob said unto Pharaoh,

The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.

Again it is said,

And Jacob blessed Pharaoh, and went out from before Pharaoh (Gen. 47:7-10).

Jacob's conduct was certainly very different toward Pharaoh to what it was when expecting to meet Esau; and if the latter serves to illustrate the proverb, that

the wicked flee when no man pursueth,

the former not less strikingly shows that

the righteous are bold as a lion {Prov. 28:1}.

3. A few words now on our third subject, GLORY. As we have seen, *glory* is a divine gift.

The glory which Thou gavest Me, said Jesus,

I have *given* them {John 17:22}.

God's government of us, as we have noticed, is because of relationship, and is connected with our state and walk, the object being our profit. Rewards in the glory will, no doubt, be according to our present faithfulness. But our being in the glory will be entirely because we have been objects of divine grace. Jesus said,

This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and *I will raise Him up at the last day* (John 6:40).

Jacob sadly failed, as we know. By nature and by practice a sinner; and after God had revealed Himself to him, and blessed him, his self-confidence and habit of contriving for his own ends, instead of walking with God in all simplicity, were very manifest. But with all the needed governmental discipline by the way, he was in the end in that circle of glory of which the one who was type of the true Messiah was the center, into which he had been also most unexpectedly carried by the command and power of Him who had typically been dead and alive again, who came to meet him on the way.

Looking then at Joseph's exaltation and glory in Egypt as typical of the reign of Christ, we only now observe that the man of faith was there, and that it serves, though feebly, to illustrate the fact that those who are now the objects of God's gracious blessing, after all the vicissitudes of this present time, and all the changes of their earthly pilgrimage, are privileged to expect to be in glory with Christ,

caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air {1 Thess. 4:17}.

Joseph had been hated and sold by his brethren, put into a pit

and dungeon, and taken out again. After rejection, deep humiliation, and affliction, he was at length exalted to be set over all the land of Egypt. In all this we cannot fail to see the rejected, crucified, risen, and glorified Son of God. But more than this. When manifested in glory, his Gentile bride shares his honor, and reigns *with* him; his brethren, the sons of Israel, are given the fattest of the land in subjection to him; while he is governor over all the Gentiles (Egyptians). Joseph being arrayed in fine linen, with a gold chain about his neck, riding in his chariot, and ruler over all the land of Egypt, they cried before him,

Bow the knee {Gen. 41:43}.

Here again we see the various circles of glory, both terrestrial and celestial, drawn by a divine hand for our instruction. There Jacob saw Joseph's face; for

Israel said unto Joseph, I had not thought to see *thy face* {Gen. 48:11}.

And is not this our highest and sweetest hope? for what else could really satisfy our hearts? It is not only that our blessed Lord will wear His many crowns, be King of Israel, and Governor among the nations, every knee in heaven, in earth, and under the earth bowing to Him; but the precious expectation held forth by the Holy Ghost for our hearts' joy is, that we shall be with Him and like Him,

They shall see *His face*; and His name shall be in their foreheads {Rev. 22:4}.

It is this surely that gives us to

rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory {1 Pet. 1:8}.

"The bride eyes not her garments,
But her dear Bridegroom's face;
I will not gaze on glory,
But on the King of *Grace*;
Not at the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hand;
The Lamb is all the glory
Of Immanuel's land."

How sweet is the thought that

in the ages to come,

after all His governmental ways with us through the wilderness are over,

He will shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus {see Eph. 2:7}!

The End of the Lord

James 5:11

Job was an eminently pious man. God declares that there was none like him in the earth. But he needed trial. Though he feared God and eschewed evil, he really knew little of himself, or of God.

Before honour is humility {Prov. 15:33, 18:12}.

The pious patriarch needed to be brought low, in order to be lifted up; to learn the sentence of death on everything here, in order to fully trust in God who raiseth the dead.

He had sons and daughters, and his thought of them was in relation to God --

it may be,

said he, that

they have cursed God in their hearts {see Job 1:5}.

He therefore offered burnt-offerings to God according to their number. Thus did Job continually. And most blessed too is it to see that when by God's permission Job was deprived of his oxen, sheep, camels, servants, and sons, at a stroke as it were, he

arose and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:20, 21).

This was most blessed. It showed thorough subjection to God under His bereaving hand. It manifested that this servant of the Lord was walking in the way of faith, tracing every sorrow, by whatever instrumentality it reached him, to God alone, and taking everything from His hand. And, when further affliction came, wave after wave, so that he had to relieve his bodily distress by scraping himself with a potsherd, and his wife a trouble rather than a comfort, breathing the suggestions of the great enemy of souls in advising him to

curse God and die {Job 2:9},

still his eye is so set upon God, that he turns sharply upon her, and says,

Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? (Job 2:10).

This lesson of submission was, if I may so say, in the ordinary course of a pious man. Blessed, most blessed as it is, it is not the only lesson that God has to teach. The human heart is *deceitful* above all things as well as desperately wicked. There are deep things of God too which the Spirit searcheth. To bow in submission to God in a great bereavement is to some not so difficult a lesson as to cease from our own wisdom, and to refuse every idea of creature righteousness, and self-sufficiency. To have a place of credit among men, among saints if you please, may lie underneath many active energies

which connect themselves with service to God, and acquiescence in heavy losses. God is the Searcher of the heart. He alone knows it thoroughly, for He alone has searched it. He teaches us that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and would have us cease from our own wisdom, and lean on Him as our only sufficiency and strength. He shows us that in the cross of Christ our old man was crucified. There He presents to us at a glance His estimate of man in the flesh. The flesh, morally, intellectually, religiously, is there seen under the judgment of God. Its fancied wisdom, righteousness, strength, desires, are there weighed in God's balance, and pronounced unfit for His presence -- worthy only of death and burial. It is a deep lesson to learn, that

the flesh profiteth nothing {John 6:63};

but oh! how blessed is the fact that our sufficiency is of God, and that He hath made Christ unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, that no flesh should glory in His presence, but according as it is written,

He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord {2 Cor. 10:17}.

Job little thought when his friends came, or they either, that he was going to be submitted to a further trial. But so it was. Real sympathy doubtless prompted them; for how can we suppose that otherwise they could have sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights in silence? Besides, we are told that their object was

to mourn with him, and to comfort him {Job 2:11},

and that they lifted up their voices and wept before they came near him, and that they also rent every man his mantle, and sprinkled dust on their heads toward heaven. They saw that Job's grief was very great.

But with all this good intention, and uprightness of purpose on both sides, a serious and painful controversy ensued among these men of God. Little did either of them suspect that God was permitting them to scourge one another, in order to bring out what would otherwise have remained hidden, and to bring all in self-abasement before Him. Job thought himself aggrieved, and his friends assured themselves that they were in the right. But the Lord at the end taught every one of them most valuable lessons.

It seems as if God allowed the matter to work itself out so far, that there was manifestly no help in the creature. Then the Lord came in. Job saw faults in his friends, and they were not ignorant of failure in him. Painful sentences were uttered and retorted. It was man against man, but we read little of the Lord in all the controversy. Before the controversy, Job was habitually found at the altar of burnt offering, and so was he at the end of it; but during the painful season of intercourse of these men of God, we have no reference on either side to God's altar of burnt-offering. Surely this reads us a serious

lesson; for I ask, Can there be a clearer proof of our not being in communion with the Lord, than forgetfulness of the Lamb as it had been slain? Could we be filling our mouths with carnal arguments, or be relying on the stratagems of fleshly wisdom, if we were adoringly contemplating Jesus who was crucified for sinners? Is the flesh in us laid low, while we are unmindful of its being judged and dead upon the cross? And have we power to maintain controversy or conflict, according to the mind of Christ, except we are living by the faith of the Son of God, in communion with Him whom God hath raised from the dead, who now appears in the presence of God for us?

During the controversy, Job seems to be only before men; but when he is brought into the presence of God, instrumentally perhaps, by Elihu, then he learns profitable lessons. But, through all, God was working; He marked every word that came out, and made His own judgment most clear at the end, that none of them had spoken of Him so rightly as Job.

This pious man soon learned when in God's presence something of his own sinfulness. He said,

Behold I am vile {Job 40:4}.

But this, though a good beginning, was not all that God wanted to do for him. Generalities are often easily grasped, and as easily uttered; but God must have details, if we confess our *sins*. The searching process therefore must go on, the hidden things of the heart must be brought so clearly to the conscience, that the soul finds relief only in confessing it all, and knows rest again at the burnt-offering.

In God's presence, as it were under God's eye, Job learned experimentally that He was Almighty, and the Searcher of every thought of the heart.

I know that thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee (Job 42:2).

He seems to quote the first words the Lord uttered when He spoke to Job out of the whirlwind,

Who is he that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? {see Job 38:2}

and then makes the solemn confession of his own guiltiness,

Therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not {Job 42:3}.

This is indeed renouncing his own *wisdom*. But further, he goes on to say,

I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore *I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes* {Job 42:5, 6}.

This is enough. The lessons, though so costly, have been learnt. He lays hands, as it were, on his own righteousness, and strength, and fancied goodness, and condemns all; yea, more than this, he sets self completely aside as vile and worthless,

I abhor *myself*;

and in this self-loathing frame he confesses a change of mind, "I repent." His sorrow has wrought in him a repentance not to be repented of. He lies down in self-abhorrence in dust,

because he acknowledges self only fit to be laid low in the dust, and buried out of God's sight, a sinner by birth as one of Adam's fallen race, concerning whom it was said,

Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return (Gen. 3:19);

and he takes the place of ashes, as withered up under the trial of the searching fire of an infinitely holy God. Thus the patriarch comes to the end of self, when under divine teaching in God's holy presence. It is enough; he judges himself, and needs no longer to be judged and chastened.

But more than this. He has to learn God, and the provision that He has made for such as he. While Job is thus in felt weakness and self-abhorrence before the Lord, He now undertakes for His servant. Job having given everything up to God, God can now come in and plead His cause with his three friends. We are therefore told that the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite,

My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly, in that ye have not spoken of Me the thing which is right, like my servant Job. So Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the Lord commanded them: the Lord also accepted Job {Job 42:7-9}.

How important is the last sentence,

The Lord also accepted Job {Job 42:9}.

How truly the divine statute is here fulfilled,

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted {Luke 14:11, 18:14}.

And what a profound, but simple lesson the Holy Ghost here sets before *us*. Observe that God still calls Eliphaz and his brethren Job's friends, and Job is seen no longer wrangling and contending *with* them, but crying unto God *for* them. This was the turning-point. Nor is this all. The time is now come that he who has been brought low shall be lifted up. Therefore it is added that

the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before {Job 42:7-10}.

Friends, substance, family, all more abundant, with the blessing of the Lord, than he knew before. Now I ask, beloved, what are *we* to learn from this divine narrative?

"Made Meet"

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light (Col. 1:12).

One thing marks every variety of false religion; it is uncertainty as to salvation, which is exactly opposite to the teaching of Scripture. They all deny that the atoning work *is* done, that redemption *has been* accomplished, and the truth of new creation in Christ Jesus. It is particularly characteristic too of the present day; for even true Christians, when asked if they *are* children of God, or if their sins *are* forgiven, are very commonly satisfied to reply, "I hope so"; which really means they cannot speak with certainty about it. Those who have the most extensive opportunities of judging, know how rarely such pointed questions elicit the hearty response of simple confidence, which the unalterable word of the Lord warrants. Some think that to doubt and fear are marks of humility of mind, and judge it presumption to take the ground which the grace of God in Christ Jesus has given us. It becomes, therefore, a question of great importance as to what Scripture teaches on the subject.

We have looked in vain for a single instance in the New Testament of a child of God doubting his eternal salvation. On the contrary, it abounds with witnesses of present joy, because of the knowledge of present salvation. It is what the Holy Ghost teaches. Our blessed Lord told His disciples before He left them, that they would know their security and standing in Him. Referring to the time of the Comforter's coming, He said to them,

In that day *ye shall know* that I am in my Father, *and ye in Me, and I in you* (John 14:20).

When a poor sin-burdened woman came to our Lord and shed tears over His dear feet, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, the blessed Savior would not allow her to depart without the fullest rest of soul as to her sins and guilt. To those present He said,

Her sins, which are many, are forgiven;

and turning to her He added,

Woman, thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace (Luke 7:47-50).

Again, when a rich publican came down and *received Him* joyfully, the Lord also assured him that for a sin-convicted soul to receive Him whom God had sent was to have present salvation.

This day is salvation come to this house, said He;

for the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:9, 10).

And so also taught the apostles. We find Paul, when addressing saints by the Holy Ghost on the gospel, saying,

Unto us *which are saved*, it is the power of God {1 Cor. 1:18};

and when writing to Timothy he exclaims,

Who *hath saved us* {2 Tim. 1:9}.

Again, in another epistle we find the same ground of faith maintained:

We know (not we hope, but we know) that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have (not we hope to have, but we have) a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens {2 Cor. 5:1}.

Peter, too, by the same Spirit, not only says that we rejoice in Him, whom having not seen we love, with joy unspeakable and full of glory, but, referring to present salvation, he adds,

receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls {1 Pet. 1:9}.

John also by the same Spirit says,

We know (not we hope, but *we know*) that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren {1 John 3:14}.

We know that we are of God {1 John 5:19}.

Quotations might be multiplied on this point, but enough has been adduced to show the unshaken confidence which formerly characterized Christians, who simply rested on the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the word of God, and the accomplished redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The same line of truth, only in more detail, is brought before us in the epistle to the Colossians. It appears that Epaphras had gone to that idolatrous city with the gospel. Some believed. This success he communicated to the apostle Paul. They had only just turned to God from idols through Christ. The two cardinal points of Christianity were very manifest in them; viz.,

faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and love unto all saints {see Col. 1:4}.

The apostle thanked God when he heard of these characteristics of true Christianity. It was not people merely saying that they believed, but as true faith in the Lord Jesus is always connected with life in the soul, being born of God, the consequence is that this life flows out in like-mindedness to Christ who is our life; they therefore love what He loves. He loves all saints; so do all that are born of God. But more than this. He learned from Epaphras that it was not merely affection which they manifested to certain persons, for after all this might be mere *natural affection*, but with these saints it was *spiritual* --

love in the Spirit {Col. 1:8}.

There could, therefore, be no mistake as to their reality; hence the apostle addresses them as "in Christ"; for all true believers not only have life, but Christ risen and ascended is their Life, they are therefore in Him. Thus Scripture now speaks only of two classes -- those who are "in the flesh," and those who are "in Christ." Here the apostle looks at them in the new creation,

where God sees them; hence in the second chapter he tells them,

Ye are complete in Him {Col. 2:10}.

In turning to the apostle's prayer, we find he asks first that they may have *knowledge of God's will* -- have that spiritual intelligence and understanding as to God's mind, that they may be able to walk (Col. 1:9, 10). How can Christians do God's will if they do not know it? The great adversary, therefore, has gained a great step in souls when he has succeeded in hindering them from reading, and meditating on, the word of God; for God's word gives us His will. In the third chapter he exhorts them also that the word of *Christ may dwell in them richly*. It is impossible that the importance of habitually reading the Scriptures prayerfully, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, can be overrated; in fact, it is impossible that a believer can know how to act so as to please God without it.

Observe as to walk, it is to

walk worthy of the Lord {Col. 1:10}.

How seldom we find such a standard of walk contended for. We hear much as to "consistent walk," but such a loose, indefinite character of walk is not found in Scripture, it is "worthy of the Lord," who loved us, and gave Himself for us. This is a different thought, and silences a thousand questions as to going here or there, doing this or that. The whole point is, Is it "worthy of the Lord"?

But more than this; His heart's desire by the Holy Ghost is, that they may honor the Father as they ought for having made them fit for glory --

Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light {Col. 1:12}.

The verses which follow declare that they have *present redemption*:

In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins {Eph. 1:7}.

Present deliverance --

who hath delivered us from the power of darkness {Col. 1:13};

-- and *present translation* --

who hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love {see Col. 1:13}.

Here it is something more than the other blessings --

made meet {Col. 1:12}

for the inheritance. And how can it be otherwise if we are in Christ {Col. 1:2},

yea,

complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power {see Col. 2:10}?

And yet how many Christians in the present day, while really in Christ, and having the atoning work of Christ as the foundation of all their hope of glory, are nevertheless looking for something yet to be done in their souls to make them meet for glory. Hence it is not uncommon to hear some speak of affliction and trial as squaring and fitting them as stones for the heavenly temple. Others talk of the present sufferings purifying them for glory; or of ripening them, until they become like a shock of corn ready

for the garner. Their souls have never entered into that precious declaration of the Holy Ghost, that the Father *hath made* us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, and that our place now is thanking Him for it. That affliction doth afterward yield peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby, and that through the trials we get profit and are made partakers of His holiness, are most blessedly true; but being made meet for heaven is something not *to be* done, but *has been* done. The idea of saints getting by their trials, &c., more and more meet for glory, denies the truth of man's thorough ruin in the flesh, sets aside the workmanship of God in the new creation, and questions the full value of the redemption-work of Christ; for

by *one offering* He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified {Heb. 10:14}.

Scripture tells us that Christ is

made of God unto us righteousness {see 1 Cor. 1:30},

that

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth {Rom. 10:4}.

He is also spoken of as our life --

Christ who is our life {Col. 3:4}.

If then, as we have before noticed, we are regarded by God now as not in the flesh, but in Christ, complete in Him who is our life and righteousness; and further, that God now speaks of us as accepted in Christ, and that

as Christ is, so are we in this world {see 1 John 4:17},

it becomes simple enough. All this too is traced to the Father. It was the Father who loved us and chose us in Christ, who gave us to Christ, and redeemed us by Christ; it is the Father now who welcomes us through Christ, accepts us in Christ, assures us that the cross of Christ has judicially rolled away all our sin and guilt, and evil nature too; so that now we are in the new creation, and brought into the new relationship of sons, and partakers of the divine nature.

That we wait for the redemption of the body, that change which will fashion this body of humiliation like unto His glorious body, is quite true; but as to life, forgiveness of sins, righteousness, standing, and completeness in Christ, union with Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, sonship, full title to glory, we do not wait for, because we have all this now. We are

made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light {see Col. 1:12}.

Hence we are told that

after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest of our inheritance*, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory (Eph. 1:13, 14).

Beloved, have we so believed these precious truths of God as to know the joy and rest of soul, and thankfulness too, they produce? The heart then delights to sing --

"High in the Father's house above
My mansion {abode} is prepared;
There is the home, the rest of love,
And there my bright reward.

"With Him I love, in spotless white,
In glory I shall shine;
His blissful presence my delight,
His love and glory mine.

"All taint of sin shall be removed,
All evil done away;
And I shall dwell with God's Beloved,
Through God's eternal day."

The Lord's Table

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. . . . Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils -- (1 Cor. 10:16, 17, 21).

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another (1 Cor. 11:23-33).

The believer on the Lord Jesus Christ is an object of divine, unchanging love. Through an accomplished redemption, he is set in righteousness and peace before God; and new and everlasting relationships are formed, the highest and best that God could give. Because we are in Christ, who is in the very glory of God, no position could possibly be higher; and being now

children of God {Rom. 8:16, Gal. 3:26},

no relationship could be more elevated and endearing; so that, as to our position, relationships, and blessings in Christ in heavenly places, nothing could exceed what God has made us to be, and given us to enjoy. Moreover, while passing through this

barren and thirsty land, where no water is {see Psa. 63:1},

divine grace confers on us the distinguished privilege of welcoming us to

the Lord's table {1 Cor. 10:21}

to eat

the Lord's supper {1 Cor. 11:20}.

The Church of God, while on earth, could have nothing to exceed this collective character of enjoyment and blessing. As we have often said, "It is the best thing out of heaven to be together consciously and intelligently at the Lord's table, and entering into His mind about His supper." Is it not important, then, to gather up from Scripture, as the Holy Spirit may guide, what the Lord's mind is as to this great privilege, which is so joyous and strengthening to the souls of those who can thus enter into it?

To every believer Christ is precious. Though now faith *sees* Him crowned with glory and honor, we *remember* that He was crowned with thorns; that He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death; that He died for our sins upon the tree. The believer knows that the death of Christ is the sole basis of peace, the alone foundation of hope, the only way into the unclouded presence of God. He thankfully owns that he owes all his present and eternal blessings to the blood of the cross. He thinks of the mighty work of creation, and knows that all was

brought into existence by the word of God; but, when he considers the stupendous and triumphant work of redemption, he is convinced that it could have been accomplished by nothing less than the death and blood-shedding of the Son of God. No marvel then that the death of Jesus should be of such unspeakable interest to every believer, and that it is so often brought before us in the volume of eternal truth.

In looking carefully over the Scriptures we have just read, we find

the Lord's table {1 Cor. 10:21}

spoken of in the tenth chapter (the only place in Scripture where it occurs), and the disorderly conduct of the Corinthians brought out the remarks of the apostle on the Lord's Supper in the eleventh chapter. The former gives us more the fellowship element, while the latter sets forth more of the individual exercise of soul, and condition suited to such an occasion. The reason, no doubt, why this portion of the eleventh chapter is more frequently read at such times than the verses of the tenth chapter, is because so few seem intelligently and heartily to enter into the fellowship character of it. But it is our superlative happiness, to be consciously enjoying the communion of saints at the Lord's table, while remembering Him, and showing His death till He come. Though both portions of Scripture refer to the same meeting of the saints, we cannot fail to observe some striking differences between them. The order of the chapters too must not be unnoticed, because the association or fellowship character of the Lord's table, in separation from the tables of demons, must be entered into before the soul can be rightly exercised according to the eleventh chapter. Then in the tenth chapter the cup is mentioned first. We have

the cup of blessing which we bless}

before

the bread which we break {1 Cor. 10:16}.

Now, whatever other reasons there may be for this change, it is clear, if Christian fellowship is here treated of, that its only basis can be found in that which brings us on a common level before

God in peace and blessing. This has been accomplished by the blood of Christ. Here we all find a true ground of communion, both spiritual and eternal. We bless together as with one soul. We drink of the same cup.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the *communion* of the blood of Christ? {1 Cor. 10:16}

Apart from that precious blood there could be no communion; but by it a solid and everlasting basis has been laid, and we express the true ground of communion in blessing together and drinking together the same cup. Though when thus assembled we may all have had different histories and experiences, yet now, in virtue of the all-cleansing power of the blood shed for many, we are on one common ground of peace and thanksgiving. It is also emphatically a time of praise; for it is

the cup of *blessing* which we *bless*.

Again, in the tenth chapter, instead of

the body and blood of *the Lord* {1 Cor. 11:27},

as in the eleventh chapter, we have

the blood of (the) *Christ*,

and

the body of (the) *Christ* {1 Cor. 10:16}.

This change also has its significance. In the tenth chapter, the subjects being communion and thanksgiving at the Lord's table, *the grace* of God is very especially brought before us in the work of *Christ*, and membership of the body of *Christ*. Hence we read,

It is *Christ* that died, &c. (Rom. 8:34);

made nigh by the blood of *Christ* (Eph. 2:13).

It is also as the *Christ* that He is given to be Head over all to the Church, which is His body (Eph. 1:20, 23).

The title of *Lord* brings in more the idea of dignity and authority; that of *Christ* the rich and abundant grace of God, in meeting us in our deepest need as sinners by His death, and giving acceptance and blessing in Him who is Head of the body, now in the heavenly places. What love!

And further, the communion of saints expressed at the Lord's table is also characterized as being in the membership of "one body," as formed and energized by "one Spirit." In breaking the same bread, and eating of the same loaf, we not only have *communion* together in feeding by faith upon His body given for us, but we also, in partaking of the same loaf, express our oneness in the (mystical) body. Hence we read, not only

the bread which *we* break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

but it is added,

For *we* being *many* are one bread, and *one body*; for *we* are all partakers of that *one* (bread) *loaf* {1 Cor. 10:17}.

Breaking and eating of the same loaf is the expression of our oneness in the mystical body of Christ. And the membership of one body on earth in union with the Head in heaven, formed by the Holy Ghost come down, being an essential doctrine of Christianity, how could it have been possible for the Lord's table to have been instituted on earth on any other ground? To the thoughtful believer it commends itself at once. It may, however, make manifest to some, how little the conscience has been up to the truth of the Lord's table, both as to its associations and what

it expresses. Scripture does not speak of "members of a church," or of "the minister of a church," or of "administering the Lord's Supper"; nor could such expressions have been current among Christians, if the membership of Christ's body, the varied gifts of the Head, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the communion character of the Lord's table had been truly recognized.

Scripture then does teach us about the Lord's table; not the Lord's *tables*; for being instituted for the remembrance of Himself, on the ground of the blood once shed, for the communion of saints, and for the expression of the membership of one body, however many companies there may be, and however geographically separated, still, to faith, each and all thus gathered are consciously sitting at the Lord's table, owning too the same indwelling Spirit who has united all to Christ the Head, and to each other in Him. Saints cannot go far wrong collectively when really holding the Head.

It is the death of Christ which so especially engages us when gathered to the Lord at His table. We remember Him. We think of Him as He was. We heartily respond to His loving request,

This do in *remembrance* of ME {Luke 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24, 25}.

It is the Lord Himself, who died for us, that now occupies our hearts. We shew or announce His death.

As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew *the Lord's death* till He come {1 Cor. 11:26}.

What wonderful words -- "THE LORD'S DEATH"! Let us ponder them well. The death of Him who is Lord of all, and in the highest place of authority and power! What a marvel of divine grace! What a privilege too, that now, while in our mortal bodies, we are to announce *the Lord's death*! Not that in so doing we are establishing anything on earth; on the contrary, we thus remember Him as those who are expecting to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. It is therefore said --

As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death *till He come*.

In the Lord's Supper, then, we look back upon Jesus, the Son of man, lifted up, and are occupied with His death. It is clearly this for which the Holy Ghost gathers us together. While taken up with Himself -- "ME" -- it is doing that, in thus remembering Him, which especially announces His death. Our adorable Lord well knew the need of our souls in thus having Him, who poured out His soul unto death for us, in constant remembrance -- in calling to mind this outflow of divine, perfect love, this basis of eternal peace, during the whole period of His absence. What praise becomes us!

It is, however, important to notice that, because of the peculiar calling, formation, and relationships of the body, the Church -- which was not set up till Pentecost, nor known until revealed to Paul -- it needed a special revelation from the Lord to fully declare to us His mind concerning His supper. For while all know it was instituted by the Lord Himself, as recorded in the gospels, yet there we observe that it came in after the Passover, and had a prospect kingdom-wise. The Jewish order of things not being at that time completely set aside, (for after Pentecost Peter preached that Messiah would come, and set up the kingdom, if the nation repented, Acts 3:19,) our Lord at the supper referred to the kingdom in hope, the period of His setting

up millennial blessing on the earth, saying,

I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until *that day* when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (Matt. 26:29).

But we are taught to shew the Lord's death *till He come*. Observe here, not only that the supper was instituted after the Passover, but that our Lord partook of the passover with them. He said,

With desire I have desired to *eat this passover with you* before I suffer (Luke 22:15).

It was His service to fulfil all righteousness. Whereas at the supper, though profoundly and perfectly entering into its character in all its marvelous blessing *to us*, so that He gave thanks, yet instead of eating, He gave it to His disciples to eat. He said,

Take, eat {1 Cor. 11:24};

and so we eat, as knowing, He will come from heaven to take us to Himself. This needed a special revelation from the ascended Lord, to set us in the proper posture of expectancy at His table. We therefore read that the apostle Paul informed the assembly at Corinth that he had received the instruction then needed by the Church of God. He said,

I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, after He had supped

(or, In like manner also the cup, after having supped),

saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me (1 Cor. 11:23-25).

Thus far the apostolic announcement is almost a narration of what took place when the Lord instituted His supper; only the supper is separated from the Passover, which preceded it, and brought out in its own proper distinctness. What follows, however, is entirely new, and remarkably suited to the special calling of the Church of God. For it is not the kingdom to be set up on earth which is given as the boundary for keeping the supper on earth; but it is the Lord's coming *for us*, when we shall be changed, and caught up to meet Him in the air. The inspired apostle therefore added,

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come (1 Cor. 11:26).

Living as we are between the cross and the glory -- Christ crucified and Christ coming -- we *look back* on Calvary, and *remember Him*; we *look up* by faith into heaven, and *see Him*, and know that we are in Him, and He in us; and we *look forward* to His coming, to take us to glory *with Him*. As therefore this hope is peculiar to the Church of God, as terminating her sojourn here, we can easily understand why we are instructed that we are to eat the Lord's Supper, and shew His death, not till the kingdom come, but till He come; for, from other Scriptures, we know that His coming for us will be before He comes out of heaven in power and great glory to establish His kingdom. It is our happy privilege therefore, thus to remember the Lord *till He come*.

The vital point in the Lord's Supper is discerning the Lord's body, which we do by the exercise of faith. To eat the bread and drink of the cup as a mere formal routine is displeasing to the Lord. It is only a piece of lifeless ritualism, a kind of Christianity without Christ, alas! so fashionable and prevailing at the present time. It was this which brought such severe discipline from the Lord on so many in the Church at Corinth.

For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

They were professing to eat the Lord's Supper, but were forgetful of the Lord --

not discerning the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29, 30).

A more solemn delinquency perhaps can scarcely be practiced, and could not fail to call for the Lord's discipline. It seemed common at Corinth, for the Lord's all-seeing eye detected it in *many*. Nor could it in any place be unnoticed by Him, with whatever outward propriety, and apparent sanctity, it might be covered. At Corinth some were sickly, others were weak, and others removed by death, for the Lord's governmental discipline was exercised on *many*.

For this cause, *many* are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (1 Cor. 11:30).

Professing then to take the Lord's Supper, and not when taking the bread and wine *to discern the Lord's body*, is to eat and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, and to bring damnation (condemnation, or judgment), for such are guilty (not of, but) in respect of the body and blood of the Lord (1 Cor. 11:27, 29). They do not regard it as a sacrifice.

The Lord's Supper is also to be eaten with self-examination. Not self-examination to see whether we are good enough, prepared enough, and the like, for it is not a question as to fitness for eating or *not*; but having examined ourselves, we are *to eat*. That is, we are not to take the Lord's Supper in a careless state of mind, but to come to it in a condition of soul suited to the Lord's presence.

Let a man examine himself, and *so* let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup (1 Cor. 11:28).

We are to approach the supper of the Lord with self-examination and self-judgment, that not a spot of unjudged evil may be allowed on us, the Holy Spirit be not grieved, and our Lord well pleased; for it is the Lord's presence, the Lord's table, the Lord's Supper, the body and blood of our Lord, in the perfectness of divine love, which engage us on this occasion.

But some may say, I dare not examine myself; if I did, I should make such appalling discoveries that I could not go to the Lord's table, because I should find myself so unfit. This, however, is not what we find here. It is a divine direction to

examine himself, *and so let him eat*;

that is, that true self-examination as to life and walk answers to that state of soul which suits the Lord on such an occasion. No doubt, when we are in the searching light of God's most holy presence in the exercise of self-examination, much will be detected which we deplore before the Lord; but are we to stay away from His supper on this account? Certainly not. But having judged ourselves, and condemned, as in His sight, every thing we have discovered contrary to His mind we are to eat --

So let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

Therefore these precious words are added,

For if we judge ourselves, we should not be judged
(1 Cor. 11:28, 31).

We should partake of the Lord's Supper then, not in a state of mere formality or carelessness, but with all solemnity, as having examined and judged ourselves, and therefore not conscious of associating any uncleanness with His presence; for how otherwise could we be enjoying the Lord and His work? If the head of a well-ordered household would have each member approach the family table with order and cleanliness, and would feel that disrespect was cast upon him by one taking his seat there bespattered with spots of defilement and carelessly attired, could our adorable Lord be less sensitive as to the state of soul with which we surround His table? Could it be a matter of indifference to Him whether or not we appeared there with unjudged evil? Most certainly not, as the Scripture before us clearly shows; yet how blessed is the divine assurance, that

if we judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

On the other hand, because the Lord loves us, and we are His own, He must govern and discipline.

As many as I love I rebuke and chasten {Rev. 3:19}.

The two lines of truth, that the Lord's people are objects of His love, and also of His *government*, run like parallel lines all through Scripture; nor can His ways with us be understood, unless these two lines are clearly seen. If then there be the absence of *self-judgment*, it will call for the *Lord's governmental-judgment*, or it may be the *judgment of the assembly*, for these three orders of judgment are found in this epistle. If the Lord's governmental interference be called for, He must judge according to His own perfect wisdom and faithfulness; but, as we have seen, this would not be needed if *we judge ourselves*;

but when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world (1 Cor. 11:32).

The *present* sphere of the Lord's judgment is the house of God, *by-and-by* it will be the world. Those who are not dealt with governmentally *now*, will be condemned with the world *then*. Let us never forget that our present blessing, as well as the Lord's glory, are connected with the *state of soul* in which we are found at the Lord's table. Our title to be there is, that we are *redeemed by Christ*; our blessing when there is, that our state is *according to Christ*, and that we are occupied with Him.

Let us then, dear fellow-Christians, have it warmly impressed upon our hearts, firstly, that there is such a precious reality as the Lord's table, which is essentially characterized by communion, and the expression of one body in the cup of blessing which *we* bless, and the bread which *we* break. Secondly, that in eating the Lord's Supper, we remember HIM, shew the Lord's death, which He would have continued "till He come." Thirdly, that the vital characteristic of being thus occupied is discerning the Lord's body. Without this, it is

eating and drinking unworthily {1 Cor. 11:29}

-- a dead observance -- which may bring forth the Lord's solemn discipline. Fourthly, that the Lord looks for a condition of soul in us suited to such a happy and holy privilege, therefore should it be approached with self-examination, and, if needful, self-judgment. When this is absent, He must chasten because He

loves, and because He finds associated with His name and table that which is dishonoring to Him, and unprofitable to us.

If in 1 Cor. 10 separation from the idol's temple, and from eating of the tables of demons, are pointed out as necessitated on account of the divine character of fellowship in the membership of the one body which the Lord's table sets forth, we have also in the eleventh chapter the individual exercises, condition of soul, and discipline which suit the partaking of the Lord's Supper. It is the former line of instruction that has been so lost sight of, though the latter is always of all-importance. Many pious souls no doubt know what it is as individuals to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of the Lord, and to enjoy perhaps the supper of the Lord, who have little idea of the comprehensive import and fellowship character set forth by the cup and the loaf. In this they come short of the Lord's mind. Self likes individuality, even in a pious path, for it suits self-love and gratifies nature. But while the Lord holds each saint *individually* accountable, and has set each in personal dependence on, and responsibility to, Himself, yet He has established a *fellowship of saints* divine in its character, for which He has wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, and for which also we are accountable to Him. While individually the objects of His love and care, we are also

members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones
{Eph. 5:30}, and

members one of another {Rom. 12:5}.

Our present profit and blessing are surely in carrying out the Lord's mind in all things. We must not close our eyes to the spurious imitations and corruptions of the truth which surround us. May the Lord keep us faithful to Himself!

The practical question for each of our souls is, Do I recognize, according to Scripture, the Lord's table? and am I, when there, entering into the Lord's mind about it? Characterized as His table is by *the communion* of the blood of Christ, and *the communion* of the body of Christ, how necessarily it excludes all who do not believe in Him to the saving of the soul! How distinctly also the divine character of fellowship in the membership of "one body," of which Christ is Head, separates us from every other fellowship, and leaves no room for any official administration of it! Failure there has been and may be; but when the soul has the sense of being at the Lord's table, how can anything dishonoring to Him be excused or tolerated? And when the divine membership of the body of Christ is realized, how could any other membership be allowed? Impossible. And this communion is holy and real.

The bread (not that is administered, but) which *we* break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?
{1 Cor. 10:16}.

When we are intelligently sitting at the Lord's table, breaking and eating the same loaf, and drinking of the same cup, we enjoy communion of saints in no less a circle than the membership of one body of which Christ is Head, so that every saint in Christ Jesus is an object of our hearts affections, and interests. This is not sectarianism; it is exactly the reverse, because it embraces all saints. The ground is not *narrower* than the membership of the "one body," nor can it in faithfulness to Christ be *wider*. Oh for constant and unfeigned subjection to the Lord's will!

The Epistle to the Church At Philippi

In considering any book of Scripture, it is most helpful to have a knowledge of some particular line of truth of which it treats. For instance, Ephesians sets forth most blessedly the Church of God, the body of Christ; Colossians, the glories of the Head of the body, and the mischievous results of not holding the Head. In Galatians, the apostle contends most uncompromisingly for the finished work of Christ -- glorying in the cross, as separating us from the world, putting an end to all fleshly pretensions, and refusing everything supplemental to the work of Christ as subversive of it, and damaging to souls. In Philippians, we have devotedness prominently set forth. There is much more, no doubt, in all these epistles; but in these remarks we refer to prominent points.

In turning to Philippians, some may be ready to ask, What are we to understand by devotedness? To which we reply, Did not our Lord refer to this subject when He said,

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me {Luke 9:23}?

Devotedness is heartily yielding ourselves to the claims of Christ, and therefore refusing the claims of self, and of the world. In a word, devotedness is following Christ, walking as He walked.

You will observe that this epistle is addressed to those who are in Christ --

To all *the saints in Christ Jesus* which are at Philippi {Phil. 1:1},

as we read in the first verse. This is surely where God began with us --

When we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus {Eph. 2:5, 6}.

This is the beginning of our history as saints, and is the starting-point of true devotedness. A person cannot be said to be intelligently on the ground of devotedness, till he enters, by faith, upon this new position, which God has given him as a new creation in Christ Jesus.

This is again alluded to in the third chapter, where four characteristics of true Christians are grouped together.

1. With such there is no question of mending, or improving man in the flesh. The death of Christ forbids the thought. On the contrary, we have judged

the flesh, with its affections and lusts {see Gal. 5:24},
to be so irremediably bad, that we have accepted its crucifixion under the judgment of God, with Christ, and set it aside as unfit for God or His service --

We are the circumcision {Phil. 3:3}.

2. We so know God in Christ as the Giver of His Son, and the source of all our blessings, that our hearts adoringly go out to Him in praise --

We *worship* God in the Spirit {Phil. 3:3}.

3. We so know Him who has loved us, and glorified God in our redemption, as to delight in the infinite glory of His person, and His highest exaltation --

We rejoice in Christ Jesus {Phil. 3:3}.

4. Seeing God's estimate of our old man in the cross, we refuse the claims of the flesh, its resources and pretensions, as unworthy of our trust; and that not only as regards flesh in ourselves, but as in any one else --

We have no confidence in the flesh {Phil. 3:3}.

It is plain, then, that the starting point of all true devotedness is the apprehension of our new standing, position, and relationships "as in Christ Jesus."

The energy of devotedness is connected with rejoicing in the Lord. Apart from Him we are perfect weakness.

Without me,
said Jesus to His disciples,
ye can do nothing {John 15:5}.

Taken up with Him, we are attracted to Him, find Him to be our strength, and are drawn on in His ways. Again and again, in this brief epistle, is this rejoicing alluded to, like another witness, reminding us that

the joy of the Lord is our strength {see Neh. 8:10}.

The heart being set free from self and sin, finds in Him an unchanging source of joy and strength. In this epistle there is no question of guilt or sins taken up; but the soul is taken up with the Lord, and stayed upon Him. Peace, communion, and devotedness is the divine order. It is when the heart is enjoying the sweetness and perfectness of divine love, disentangled from self and circumstances, standing in liberty in Christ, that we are free to follow Him with girded loins, holding forth the word of life. And it is because He changeth not, is above all circumstances, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, that it is our happy privilege to

rejoice in the Lord alway {Phil. 4:4}.

The spring of true devotedness is the knowledge of the moral excellencies, perfections, and worth of Christ Himself. The apostle Paul could say,

What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, &c. (Phil. 3:7, 8).

Paul had seen the Man in the glory. The perfections of Him had

disclosed to him the failure of all else. The brightness of that light had made manifest the imperfection of all that he had gloried in. His righteousnesses now looked like filthy rags. His comeliness was turned into corruption. He saw that His religiousness was totally unfit for God. The ineffable beauty and glory of that blessed Savior had shown him that what he had hitherto boasted of was altogether a corrupt and foul mass, which could now only be counted by him as dung. That which man most glories in looks poor indeed in the light of the glory of the risen and ascended Son of God. Weighed in the balance with Christ, all is lighter than vanity. Measured by the standard of His eternal excellencies, all comes far, far short, and is found only dung and dross -- corrupt and unclean in God's most holy presence. No one could speak more truly of a blameless life in his dealings with his fellow-men than Paul. As to his pedigree, he was of pure Israelitish blood, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of a favored tribe, zealous in the Jews' religion above many, an out and out Pharisee, strict adherent to Jewish ordinances and legal ways; but when he put all these things together in the light of the presence of the glorified Son of God, he found that self and pride, unbelief and vain-glory, abounded in them all; so that those things which had been gain to him he now felt to be positive loss, and not for the honor of God. Having had to do with that blessed Man in the glory, who is at God's right hand, Paul's heart was so captivated that he never could be satisfied till he was with Him. He could not bear to be outside the light and joy of His blessed presence, or fail to respond to the desires of His heart. Nothing can make up for a lack of personal acquaintance with Christ. Intimacy with Himself is certainly the secret of true devotedness. Occupied with Him, the heart readily detects, and refuses the voice of the stranger, and cannot but own the Lord's claims to be paramount. Nothing so thoroughly tests the state of our hearts, as whether or not we have intimacy with the Lord Himself.

"Far from Him, we faint and languish;
Oh, our Savior, keep us nigh!"

The *characteristics of devotedness* are largely set forth in this epistle. It is to have in us

the mind which was in Christ Jesus {see Phil. 2:5};

like Him, to be

blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation . . . lights in the world, holding forth the word of life {Phil. 2:15, 16}.

As redeemed by Christ, standing in Christ, and aiming to walk as He walked, it is easy to understand that such would therefore see everything in relation to Christ, and value everything according to Him; and this is remarkably brought out in the first chapter of this short epistle. Thus, if, as in the sixth verse, he thinks of God's present work, or, as in the tenth verse, he is occupied with the walk of the saints, he looks at both as they will appear in *the day of Christ* -- that day when everything will come out according to God, when all will be made manifest, and all His saints shall have reward from Him according to their works.

If his heart goes out after the saints, he thinks and feels for them, not as they are seen of men, but as they are precious to the deepest feelings of the heart of Him who loveth them, and washed them from their sins in His own blood. He could say,

God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:8).

If he looked at the galling chains which bound him, and so painfully pressed upon him, as a prisoner for the truth's sake, he could think of those heavy irons as associated with the Lord Jesus, whom he served, and for whom he suffered. Hence he called these fetters his

bonds in Christ.

He saw Christ, as it were, written on every link of his chain. By faith he so looked to Him, so dealt with Him, and so received everything out of His hand, that he knew himself to be the prisoner of Jesus Christ, and felt his chains to be as he said,

his bonds in Christ (Phil. 1:13).

Then as to preaching. Here too the *person* of his adorable Lord was everything. It was not merely the quantity, as people now call it, of evangelical machinery, but whether Christ -- that blessed Man in the glory -- was exalted in it. It was not enough for the apostle that persons preached *about Christ*, but whether the person -- *Christ Himself* -- was exalted; that was the point; and if so, no matter by whom this was, he could say,

I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice (Phil. 1:18).

If bodily health or bodily suffering were the subjects, he seemed to have had but one desire animating his soul; and what could that be in one who knew Christ in the glory to be the one absorbing object of his heart? Could he consider his own body apart from Him? Certainly not. It was therefore that

Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death (Phil. 1:20).

As to this *present life*, he could say,

For me to live is Christ.

Blessed testimony! True mark of the faithful! It is not merely holding doctrines about Christ, however orthodox they may be, but expressing Christ, showing forth His characteristics, exhibiting His ways, habits, and spirit continually -- being really yoked with Him who was meek and lowly in heart. What is devotedness but this? Happy those who, rejoicing in Christ, are seeking in all points to be like Christ -- obedient, faithful, meek and lowly, not seeking to do their own will, but subject in all things to His will. Wondrous expression,

For me to live *is* Christ (Phil. 1:21).

Then as to departing. It was not rest, or joy, or heaven, or happiness, that fired his soul with hope when he thought of putting off this tabernacle. No! As in other matters, so here, he looked at it in relation to the great object of attraction before his heart -- Christ Himself. His joy in the prospect of departing was to be *with Christ*. Blessed prospect! It was not the crown, the deliverance from sorrow, or even the positive and eternal enjoyment of the place. No; it was to be with Him, as it must be with every truly devoted heart; Christ there as well as Christ here --

having a desire to depart, and to be *with Christ* (Phil. 1:23).

We find *examples of devotedness* in the second chapter. The Lord Himself of course stands first and foremost in all His

infinite and glorious perfections; then Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, each in his measure, are strikingly set before us. The dear apostle's sorrow at this time was, that

all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's {Phil. 2:21};

that other interests came in to displace the paramount claims of Christ; so that self became an object, The apostle therefore pointed them to the lowly, obedient Son of God, as the true and perfect pattern of devotedness, marked as it was with humiliation and rejection here, though followed with the highest exaltation above. He desires, therefore, that this mind which was in Him may characterize them.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore also God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father {see Phil. 2:5-11}.

Thus this perfect One is traced in the path of unfailing obedience and self-abnegation, making Himself of no reputation, always delighting to do the will of Him that sent Him, and not stopping short of the entire surrender of Himself unto death, and that

even the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}.

To Him their eyes are here directed as the One to be imitated and followed, who certainly looked not on His own things, but whose heart was set on glorifying the Father on the earth, and finishing the work which He gave Him to do.

And the apostle tells the Philippian saints of his readiness to be offered up, joyfully sacrificing his own life in the service of his blessed Master. His heart's desire so goes out after others, that he entreats them so to walk, that he may rejoice in the day of Christ that he has not run in vain, neither labored in vain.

Yea,
said he,
and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all {Phil. 2:17}.

In all this he certainly has

the mind which was in Christ Jesus {see Phil. 2:5},

and is looking not on his own things, but on the things of others.

Then Timothy is brought before us, as another whose heart was unselfishly set upon the welfare of others, at a time too when

all seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's {see Phil. 2:21},

The apostle on this account speaks of sending him to Philippi, if the Lord so ordered. He says,

I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state; for I have no man likeminded, who will *naturally care for your state* {Phil. 2:19, 20}.

Epaphroditus is also introduced into this blessed group of

devoted servants, in company with our adorable Master. Instead of seeking his own things, we are told that for the work of Christ he was sick nigh unto death; and so completely did he set aside selfish considerations, that he did not regard his own life, so that he might accomplish his service to the beloved apostle of our Lord. The chief sorrow too of dear Epaphroditus was, not that he himself was sick, but that the saints at Philippi had heard of his sickness, for he knew this would distress their hearts. We are told

he was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick {Phil. 2:26}.

His journey to Rome, to take the ministration of love to the apostle in prison, is spoken of as *the work of Christ*, and the saints are enjoined to receive him in the Lord with all gladness, and to hold such in reputation, (Phil. 2:26-30). Thus in the second chapter the perfect One is first set before us as the great exemplar of devotedness, and then men of like passions with ourselves, who, through grace, had, in their measure, the mind in them which was also in Christ Jesus.

The path of devotedness is blessedly and plainly marked out in the third chapter. It begins with the excellent knowledge of Christ (Phil. 3:7), and terminates with His coming again (Phil. 3:20). The one who pursues this path resembles a runner at the games, pressing on most perseveringly toward the mark for the prize. His heart is so single that "one thing" absorbs his energies. He has but one object -- that he may win Christ -- be actually where He is, in the soul-satisfying enjoyment of his precious Master face to face. Nothing less can meet the fervent desires of his longing soul; for he has already had to do with Him, and a glimpse of the glorified One had convinced him that there was no beauty elsewhere, nothing comparable to Him. He counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of his blessed Lord, so that he could run the race, looking away unto Him, and sing --

"Compared with Christ, in *all* beside
No comeliness I see."

In pursuing the path of devotedness, pressing toward the mark for the prize, there were three things which the apostle diligently sought -- knowledge, power, and position, while looking for the coming of the Savior at the end, as the bright and blessed hope which lighted up every step of the path.

To sight and sense the way is fraught with difficulties, while faith knows no halting-place, counts nothing worthy of a moment's delay, and looks for no rest till with the Lord. The soul that ardently pursues this path longs above every thing to win Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Let us now look at these four marks of the path of true devotedness -- knowledge, power, position, and hope. And it should not be unnoticed that the path of worldliness and unbelief proposes the same four objects, yet, alas! how wide the contrast as to their real worth.

1. As to *knowledge*, the press in this day can scarcely print copies fast enough, even with the facilities of steam power, to

supply the increasing craving for knowledge of the teeming millions. It is found too among all classes. The cheapest and lowest forms of periodical literature abound to meet the growing thirst for knowledge among the poorest of our neighbours; while scientific and refined volumes of learning and intelligence for the more advanced and polite are equally numerous. But what is the object and end of all such knowledge? Does it really climb a step beyond the range under the sun of vanity and vexation of spirit? It boasts of "looking from nature up to nature's God"; but does it ever know God in this way? Are we not told that

the world by wisdom knows not God {see 1 Cor. 1:21}?

How different was the heart-longing of the devoted apostle! He desired knowledge, it is true; but it was

that I may *know Him* {Phil. 3:10},

and this was his constant, most fervent desire. What he had already known of Christ had so captivated his heart (and who on earth ever knew Him so well as Paul?), that his whole soul went out after further knowledge of Him. To know more of the infinite worth, unsearchable perfections, and moral excellencies of the Lord Himself, was the knowledge that he so craved.

Dear fellow-Christians, are we growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? Are we desiring it? Are we searching the Scriptures for it? Are we having such personal intercourse with Christ, as to ensure better acquaintance with Him, His fulness, offices, grace, faithfulness, unchanging, perfect love?

2. With regard to *power*, what is there that men will not give for a little increase of power over their fellow-men? What sacrifices they often make to obtain it? And, after all, it is only a power that exercises its jurisdiction in a world that is under judgment, lying in the wicked one, and limited by the chilly hand of death. But the *power* which the Lord's devoted servants desire is not that, but far greater and higher, it is

the *power of His resurrection* {Phil. 3:10}.

God has given to us risen life in Christ, who is the other side of death, and it is the power of that in a world like this -- a power that knows its origin to be beyond this present scene altogether -- a life in Him who is the Head of all principality and power. It is a fact that Christ died, and that we died with Him; it is a fact also that Christ rose from the dead, and that we have life in Him who is risen. It is this risen life in the soul that the apostle so craved the power of, that he might walk here as a risen man, not after the flesh, not like the world, but manifest the walk and conduct of a man on earth who is one with Christ in heaven. Beloved, are we ardently desiring this *power*?

3. The third point is *position*. Men will work night and day, and persevere year after year, to raise themselves to a position above others; but the position that Paul so earnestly desired was to be cast out with Christ; to be despised, hated, and to suffer for being like Christ; to suffer for righteousness' sake, and for well-doing; to have

the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death {Phil. 3:10}.

Is this, dear Christian brethren, the position in this world that we are honestly seeking? Is it "the fellowship of His sufferings"? If so, we shall, like the apostles, rejoice at being counted

worthy to suffer shame for the name of the Lord Jesus {see

Acts 5:41}.

4. As to *hope*, the world says it is hoping for better days; but, alas, how delusive! How it flatters itself in its own eyes! What boastings are heard of "peace and safety!" How largely too it talks of "progress" and "advancement," thus refusing to accept the divine verdict,

Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31}.

But the Christian's hope is eternally bright and glorious, shedding its gladdening rays over every step of the path of devotedness; for it is the coming of the Lord Himself. As already risen with Christ, seated in Him in heavenly places, one with Him by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we look for the Savior. As in Christ, according to God's eternal purpose and grace, and by the precious blood of His own Son, having a place in heaven, citizenship in heaven, "we look" not for

earthly things {Phil. 3:19},

but

we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ {Phil. 3:20},

when redemption-power will be applied to our bodies, and we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then this body of humiliation shall be changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body, and we shall be like Him, and with Him for ever. Then our bodies, as well as our souls, will have capacities for entering into, and enjoying our eternal inheritance, as joint-heirs with Christ.

Such is the climax of the Christian's pilgrimage, the terminus of the path of devotedness now laid open to us, and how glorious it is! Then we shall

win Christ {Phil. 3:8}.

The race will have been run. Days for faith, and times of failure, will have passed for ever. The wilderness journey will be an event of the past. Hope will be realized. The prize possessed. The glory of God and of the Lamb actually enjoyed. The path began with our being

in Christ {1 Cor. 1:30, Eph. 2:10, Phil. 1:1},

and it ends with our being *with* Christ, and *like* Christ for ever. As to the end, there is no doubt for those who are Christ's. Jesus said,

I will raise him up at the last day {John 6:40, 44, 54};

and He is faithful that promised. He cannot deny Himself. Hence we can truly sing --

"We nightly pitch our moving tent
A day's march nearer home."

Some of the *hindrances to devotedness* are touched on in the fourth chapter. We may briefly refer, first, to a want of yieldingness --

Let your moderation (yieldingness) be known unto all men.

The Lord is at hand {Phil. 4:5};

and secondly, the heart burdened with cares --

Be careful for nothing {Phil. 4:6}.

If we trace the ways of Jesus, we never find Him contending for His rights, though He was the only one here who had a right to every thing. But His mind was always to do the will of Him that sent Him. He yielded Himself wholly and unreservedly to the Father's will. A Christian leaves the path of devotedness, the

moment he contends for his own rights. He can afford to yield, for

the Lord is at hand {Phil. 4:5};

and men should know us as such:

Let your yieldingness be known unto all men {see Phil. 4:5}.

We are to

contend

for one thing, and that

earnestly;

it is

for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints {Jude 1:3}.

We are enjoined also to be

careful for nothing {Phil. 4:6},

for when cares are pressing on the mind, our communion with Him, who enjoins us to cast all our care upon Him, for He careth for us, becomes interrupted, and we are weakened and checked in the path of devotedness. It is when our yieldingness is known to men, we are careful for nothing, and all our requests made known unto God, that the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. And it is when our hearts and minds are occupied with the truth and ways of God, doing His will, that the

God of peace {Phil. 4:9}

will be with us.

Double-mindedness; Or, Lamenting After the Lord

1 Samuel 7

It is one thing to be a Christian, it is another thing to be a *happy* Christian. To know the Scripture doctrine of the believer's position and privileges is very different from having the *possession* and *enjoyment* of them. The fact is, that we are slow to enter upon, and make our own, the blessings God has graciously given us in Christ.

In Samuel's day, the people were characterized for a long time by *lamenting after the Lord*; and this, we fear, describes the state of heart of thousands of Christians now. They are *desiring* rather than *possessing* -- *longing for* instead of *enjoying* fellowship with the Lord Himself; *hoping to have*, instead of entering into God's thoughts and purposes, and *tasting His joys*. Why is this? In Israel's day there was unjudged evil among them, and the eye and heart were not single. Hence they were told to

put away the strange gods, and Ashtaroath,
and also to
serve the Lord only {see 1 Sam. 7:3}.

So now there are

strange gods {1 Sam. 7:3},

some things occupying the heart contrary to the truth, something between the soul and the Lord; it may be the world, its pride, wealth, honor, pleasure, in some shape or other; or it may be darling lusts, self-love, self-exaltation, or something else cherished or allowed, which the word of God positively condemns. The eye, therefore, cannot be single, nor the heart only desiring the glory of God -- serving Him only. The affections are not set on heavenly things; the eye and heart are not exercised in the life and walk of faith; and things of time and sense so occupy the soul, that there is *desire to have* rather than *present possession and enjoyment*, so that, like Israel of old, they go on year after year *lamenting after the Lord* (1 Sam. 7:2, 3).

The people, however, hearkened to the prophet's counsel.

They were willing to think badly of their ways. They took the place of self-judgment. Their errors were made manifest. They determined at all costs to separate from evil. They were conscious of having sinned. They saw that their strange gods and Ashtaroath had displaced and dishonored Jehovah. They resolved therefore to

cease to do evil {Isa. 1:16},

by putting them away from among them. So far this was good, but the next step would be

learning to do well {see Isa. 1:17}.

Separation from known evil was not enough -- they were to pursue positive godliness and devotedness. We, therefore, read of their humiliation before God for such deep dishonor to Him, fasting before the Lord, confession, saying,

We have sinned {1 Sam. 7:6};

and of taking the place of conscious weakness, and of relying only upon the strength of the living God, as their desire for the prophet's prayer plainly intimated. This was learning to do well. The result was that they were soon delivered from the power of the enemy that had so long oppressed them, and their joy in the true God was manifest by their setting up a stone, and calling it

Ebenezer; saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us (1 Sam. 7:4-12).

How simple is all this, and yet how full of instruction and admonition to us! What searching of heart and ways should this inspired account produce in us! If our walk be so careless that unjudged sin is covered up, no marvel that the Holy Spirit is so grieved that we are not possessing and enjoying the Lord's presence and truth. And if the eye be not single, and the heart really set upon serving Him, and Him *only*, it is not surprising that weakness and lamentation characterize us both individually and collectively.

How different is the condition of saints as contemplated in the epistles. There we read

we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:11}.

Being

in Christ, complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power {see Col. 2:10},

our state is supposed to be rejoicing in the Lord always, rejoicing evermore, rejoicing in Christ Jesus -- happy, and making others happy. It is a mark of our being really happy in the Lord when we are making others happy. As love provokes love, so there is something infectious in real spiritual joy. Who visits saints much, and does not often prove this? If we cannot make others happy in the Lord, the inference is strong that our own souls are at a low ebb. The apostle said, We

comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God {see 2 Cor. 1:4}.

Is it not possible that the standard of practical godliness is too low among us? To have as much of the world as possible, and to satiate the desires of the flesh as far as can be, and still to maintain credit among the saints of being "consistent Christians," as the term is, may be the conventional thought of this day; but it will not do, for such a standard opens wide the door to many a "strange god," and gives a lodging-place to many an "Ashtaroth." Whether we think of ourselves as individuals, or of the church of God collectively, there can be but one question as to the standard of practical conduct, and it is this, Does it suit Christ? When you hear a person say, "What harm is there in this or that?" you may be sure that he has not the sense of the holiness due to the place and relationships the grace of God has brought him into, nor of the claims of Christ; for we are not our own, but are bought with a price. Does this suit Christ? should be the question, and it carries with it an answer for all the difficulties of the most active imagination of the fleshly mind. To

walk worthy of the Lord {Col. 1:10}.

is how Scripture puts it.

The truth is that *we are* blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. We have been made alive, raised up together, and *made* to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. Observe this word "made." It is done. We are already associated with Him who is exalted at God's right hand. We have the present possession of life eternal in Christ, we are in Christ in heavenly places, we are fully blessed in Him, we are sons of God. Marvelous blessings! Should we then be *lamenting after the Lord*? Certainly not, but *rejoicing in the Lord*; seeking the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God -- our minds set and fixed on things above, and not on things on the earth. In a word, *possessing* and *enjoying* all that God has made us and given us in Christ; yea more, joying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received these amazing blessings. If you say, How can I possess and enjoy all this? we reply, not by efforts and resolutions, but by simply believing God's own statements as to His rich mercy in thus blessing us in Christ.

Beloved fellow-Christians, let us beware of the snares of unbelief, by whomsoever presented, or in whatever shape. Let the Scriptures be the sole and exclusive authority to our hearts and consciences. What can be worse than not to receive

implicitly what God has written? Let us watch against the Christ-dishonoring, soul-damaging ways of false humility and doubt. When Scripture gives us the plainest possible statement, what but unbelief could suggest the question, What does it mean? In these days of growing rationalism, we need to guard against every insinuation which refuses the direct and absolute authority of the written Word of God. Let us not take lower ground than it gives us, notwithstanding the scorn of unbelief, and charge of presumption that skeptical minds may intimate.

Let God be true, and every man a liar {see Rom. 3:4},

was, and still is, the motto of believing souls. To have "strange gods" among us -- the heart set on things of earth -- and to be faithfully serving the Lord too, is simply impossible. To be consciously and happily one with Christ, and to be practically taking a place of one with men in the flesh, cannot be. No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. If the world, and men in the flesh are worthy, or if the interests of self in your esteem have the first place, let it be so, and honestly abandon Christian ground, and say, "Baal is my god." But if Christ be worthy, if He who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, has in our esteem most justly the first and only claim, then let us serve Him only, follow Him closely, and *walk worthy of the Lord* who hath called us unto His kingdom and glory.

"My Savior, keep my spirit stayed
Hard following after Thee,
Till I in robes of white arrayed
Thy face in glory see."

On Prayer

The relationship with God, which by grace the believer is brought into, is necessarily connected both with child-like confidence and dependence. The knowledge of the Father, the liberty we have to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus, at all times, the operations of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, and the all-prevailing plea given to us in the name of Jesus, lead us to expect that the Christian while here would be peculiarly given to the exercise of prayer.

The cry which the Spirit produces, the Spirit of adoption, when sent forth into our hearts, being

Abba, Father {Rom. 8:15},

opens up to us at once His tender love, as well as His fatherly care and resources. It is this knowledge of the Father that gives such confidence and perseverance in prayer, as well as comfort in thanksgiving, and worship.

The Father Himself loveth you,
said Jesus,
because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God {John 16:27}.

The Spirit thus reveals the Father, and makes us know that He delights to give His children good things.

If ye, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him {see Matt. 7:11}.

The sense on our hearts of the reality of this relationship, which, according to the Father's eternal purpose and grace in Christ Jesus, we are now brought into, makes it natural, if I may so speak, for Christians to be emphatically men of prayer, both for themselves and others; and especially when challenged with such a gracious declaration as

He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? {Rom. 8:32}.

Nor can there be a doubt that it is the will of God that our souls should be going out to Him in much prayer for others. The apostle Paul, in writing to Timothy, makes this perfectly clear. He says,

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men;
. . . for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour (1 Tim. 2:1-3).

Elsewhere we are enjoined to pray for

all saints {Eph. 6:18};

but this circle includes the widest possible range -- "all men." Nor is it well to overlook the quality of prayer here contemplated. It is not cold, dry formality, but as earnest and pointed as such a chain of words could well convey --

supplications, prayers, and intercessions.

We have in Scripture *private* prayer spoken of, and also

united, and it is well to consider both. The *habit* of private prayer, or such a state of constantly felt dependence on God as shall lift the heart to Him on all occasions, is set before us in such words as

Pray without ceasing {1 Thess. 5:17};

that is, wherever we are, whether in the house, or place of business, or walking the streets, to have the heart habitually going out to God about all our need. But there is another thing which nothing else will supply; it is going into a secret place to pray -- to be alone with God, to pour out the heart to Him, and wait upon Him. We find the Lord going out into

a solitary place {Mark 1:35}

to pray, going up

into a mountain {Matt. 14:23, Mark 6:46, Luke 6:12},

and

into the wilderness {Luke 5:16},

to pray. Our Lord expressed His mind for us on this point most touchingly when He said,

But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly (Matt. 6:6).

Here we have, first, the believer going into a secret place, away from every human eye and ear, for the express purpose of praying to his Father. 2nd. The fact announced that our Father is in that secret place -- "Thy Father which is in secret." 3rd. The encouragement that those who do thus seek the Father shall not fail to be "openly rewarded". How blessed this is!

As to *united* prayer, we have precious examples in Scripture of the marvelous way in which God has honored this. Our Lord too blessedly encourages our hearts on this point; and where are the Christians who cannot praise God for His mercy and faithfulness, in again and again giving most precious answers to their united supplications? Jesus said,

If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:19, 20).

But observe, there must be agreement. This is of the greatest importance. It is not one praying, and the others merely listening; but hearts united before God in presenting certain requests to Him. All going together into "the holiest of all" to present common supplication. At Pentecost, the disciples were not only

in one place,

but

of one accord {Acts 2:1},

before the mighty blessing came. Oh, if God's dear children

would only take God at His word in this particular, and seek Him earnestly and together in supplications, prayers, and intercessions, what blessed results there would be! This would soon put to flight the deadness and formality which so largely prevail in prayer-meetings at the present time. Thus crying to God, reckoning upon Him, and expecting only from Him, what rich and abundant blessing would follow!

In prayer, however, we must remember that God expects us to come before Him in uprightness.

If I regard iniquity in my heart,
says the psalmist,

the Lord will not hear my prayer {Psa. 66:18}.

He must have integrity. Evil must not be cloaked. Sin must be judged, and honestly dealt with before Him. The upright soul abhors that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good, and from such God will keep back nothing good.

No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly {Psa. 84:11}.

This is most encouraging. David had lamentably failed, and circumstances, because of his failure, seemed all against him, but he hoped in God.

David encouraged himself in the Lord his God
{1 Sam. 30:6},

and we know the blessed deliverance that followed. The *upright* soul can turn to God with confidence, and find encouragement in Him, when there is none elsewhere.

We find also in Scripture that success in prayer is connected with obedience, and especially love to the brethren. Our Lord connected the act of praying with forgiving,

if we have ought against any {see Mark 11:25};

and so with fruit-bearing and obedience to the word of God:

I have ordained you,
said Jesus,
that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, *He may give it you* (John 15:16).

And so the apostle John, after presenting to us God in His nature as Light and Love, the relationship we are called into by the Father, and the conduct suited to such relationship, exhorts that brotherly love may be real, that is,

not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth {see 1 John 3:18};

for in this way we shall assure our hearts before Him. If, however, this brotherly kindness be wanting, our hearts will condemn us, and this God knows. But if we are walking in true brotherly love, then have we confidence toward God, and obtain answers to prayer.

And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as He gave us commandment (1 John 3:19-23).

Nothing, then, can be clearer, that if we would be successful in prayer we must be obedient children, and walk in true

practical love with our brethren in the Lord. Perhaps the importance of this is too much overlooked in the present day. We must never forget that in prayer we are acting in the relationship of a child to a father; and we know that when we are truly loving our children, how hindered we feel in granting them their requests if they are acting disobediently, and not walking lovingly toward their brothers and sisters. Oh to be constantly, in felt helplessness, abiding in the Lord Jesus, finding all our resources in Him, drawing all we want by faith from Him; for He said,

If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you (John 15:7).

The confidence we should have as children of God is that our Father knows infinitely better than we do, and that He seeks our profit. To ask, therefore,

according to *His* will {1 John 5:14},

and not according to our will, is the unselfish path in which the Spirit leads. We sometimes

ask amiss,

because self, in some shape or other, is our object, and not the Lord's glory; and no marvel if such prayers are not answered.

Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, *that ye may consume it upon your lusts* (James 4:3).

Who would wish such prayers to be answered? and yet it is well to watch our hearts as to this. On the other hand, our relationship with God our Father forbids that anything should interfere with the freest actings of filial love. The Spirit, therefore, enjoins us to

be careful for nothing, but *in everything* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving to make our requests known unto God (Phil. 4:6).

He does not here promise that all our requests shall be answered, but this Scripture does enjoin that outpouring of heart becoming a child to his Father.

After all, perhaps nothing so hinders answers to prayer as the *condition of soul* we may be in. Felt nearness to God must be connected with self-abasement. No flesh can glory in His presence. When Job was so unusually near to God that he said,

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee,

how did he feel? He added,

Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes {Job 42:5, 6}.

When Isaiah was consciously in the presence of the glory of the Lord, we find him saying,

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts {Isa. 6:5}.

Again, when the prophet Habakkuk, under divine teaching, contemplated more thoroughly the ways of God, he says,

When I heard, my belly trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into my bones, &c. {Hab. 3:16}.

And so Daniel, the man greatly beloved, when he had a vision of the glory of the Lord, and heard His words, what was the

effect? He says,

There remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of His words; and when I heard the voice of His words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground {Dan. 10:8, 9}.

But some of my Christian readers will say, "These were Old Testament saints who had not learned God, as we have, in the death and resurrection of His beloved Son, and had not the Spirit of adoption, and conscious knowledge of God as their Father." I know it. But I refer to these Scriptures to shew what man, while in the body, is, when brought into felt nearness to the infinitely holy God. Surely, He is not less holy now than He ever was, though, in the brightness of that perfect holiness we know, for our joy and confidence, that Jesus has entered with His own blood; and that He is our life, righteousness, peace, and acceptance. We find the aged apostle John, when his eye for one moment rested upon the glorified Son of man in the midst of the seven candlesticks, saying,

When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead {Rev. 1:17}.

We know that the Lord soon lifted him up and comforted him; but I refer to it to shew that in the presence of divine glory flesh must be abased, and God alone exalted.

To pursue a little further this part of the subject we are considering, let us look at Jacob. He was greatly troubled, full of fear, and rightly enough made the God of Abraham and of Isaac his refuge. His prayer, as recorded in Gen. 32, was humble, earnest, and supplicatory. But with this there was some reckoning upon his own policy. Faith in God he doubtless had, but he had confidence also that a present would appease Esau's wrath, and thus help to deliver him. It was therefore necessary that God should sharply exercise His servant before answering his prayer, so that he might give the glory to Him to whom alone it was due. Hence we read at the end of the chapter, that

Jacob was left alone, and there wrestled with him a man till the breaking of the day {Gen. 32:24}.

Jacob needed his fancied strength and self-confidence to be broken down, so that he might feel his own weakness. Hence we see his thigh was put out of joint, and in this perfect helplessness he clung to the one who wrestled with him for blessing. He said,

I will not let thee go, except thou bless me {Gen. 32:26}.

Thus he was consciously helpless, and clinging to another for blessing. He was then asked his name, for God wanted him to feel his vileness as well as weakness. He therefore confesses that his name is Jacob -- supplanter. Thus he is *vile* in his own eyes as well as *weak*. He confesses that he is a supplanter, as well as helpless. And now God can abundantly honor him.

Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and *hast prevailed* {Gen. 32:28}.

Now, what do we learn from all these instances, but that God's people, when in felt nearness to Him, will be consciously weak and unworthy, and that a sense of our helplessness and vileness -- real self-abasement before God -- become us, in order that

He should bless and honor us in answering our prayers.

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted
{Luke 14:11, 18:14}.

How pride must hinder answers to prayer!

There is another reason why prayer is not more frequently answered. God has marked out the ground of approach worthy of Himself, and of the relationship His grace has formed; viz., the name of His beloved Son. Several times in our Lord's last address to His disciples, He especially taught them to ask the Father *in His name*. There is no limit to blessing to those who come in His name.

If ye shall *ask anything* in My name, I will do it
(John 14:14).

The fact is that Jesus has so infinitely glorified God in His work on the cross, that He is righteously worthy of all blessing. There is nothing too much for God to do, or to give, because of the infinite worthiness of His beloved Son. How simple this is, and how encouraging! Vile and helpless in self, yet so pleading the all-worthy name of Jesus, as to have joyful answers to prayer. He said to His disciples,

Hitherto have ye asked nothing *in My name*; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full (John 16:24).

Saints of old were wont to approach God by a sacrifice; we bring the name of Him who offered Himself without spot to God -- a sacrifice and an offering of such infinite and eternal efficacy, that it never needed to be repeated.

When Samuel prayed for God's people Israel, we are told that he took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt-offering; and no sooner had the savour of the offering gone up, than God thundered upon their enemies and delivered His people. Daniel was successful in prayer at the time of the evening oblation. Zechariah prayed to God, and was heard, while incense was being offered up. Elijah offered a bullock on the altar, when he presented prayer to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, which God immediately answered by fire from heaven. We cannot be too simple and earnest in pleading the name of the Lord Jesus in prayer.

"O plead His name, His precious name,
With boldness at the throne;
For all He is, and all He has,
Will surely be our own."

Not that the Father does not love us. Far from that. The Lord does not intercede to cause the Father to love us. Hence Jesus said,

I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God (John 16:26, 27).

It is very interesting to notice the prominence given to prayer by the Holy Ghost in the epistles. The immense importance of prayer, its simple, definite, and direct character, and the blessed results to be expected, are alike strikingly set forth.

In the first chapter of Romans, Paul not only speaks of mentioning them *always in his prayers*, but that he definitely made this request, that he might by the will of God be made a blessing and a comfort to them, and be comforted also by their

faith (Rom. 1:10-12). In the fifteenth chapter he beseeches them, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, to pray also that he might come unto them by the will of God, and may with them be refreshed; and he also desires that they may be so earnest, as to strive together with him in prayer for two other things, which are most distinctly and definitely named; viz., that he might be delivered from the unbelievers in Judæa, and that his service which he had for Jerusalem might be accepted by the saints (Rom. 15:30-32).

In the first epistle to the Corinthians, we have little said as to prayer, further than it should be in the Spirit and intelligent

I will pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also
{see 1 Cor. 14:15};

the main object of the epistle being to correct the disorders of the assembly, and to give fresh instructions on the subject. It is true that saints giving themselves to prayer and fasting is enjoined to guard from the temptation of Satan -- a most important principle.

In the second epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle again shows how much he valued the help of saints in prayer:

Ye also *helping together by prayer for us* (2 Cor. 1:11).

He prayed for them,

that they might do no evil (2 Cor. 13:7).

In Galatians we have nothing about prayer, the object of the Holy Ghost being to rebuke in the sternest way the attempts to undermine the gospel of the grace of God by adding something to it, thus giving the flesh importance, instead of holding to its entire judgment unto death in the cross of Christ -- the crucifixion of the old man. It was not the place, therefore, to expect the subject of prayer to be introduced.

Very different indeed is the epistle to the Ephesians, for the apostle is there contemplating God in His grace, eternal counsels, and ways towards us, when dead in sins, in and through Christ Jesus. The sense of this upon his heart necessarily bowed him before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in prayer and thanksgiving for them. His prayer in the first chapter is that they might have the knowledge of God's grace and power toward them, in Christ risen and ascended, as well as the hope of His calling.

In the third chapter, the contemplation of the unsearchable riches of Christ brought out in the mystery now made known, of the body the Church, so bowed him again before the Father, that he prays that, not according to His rich mercy, but according to *the riches of His glory*, they may be strengthened by the Spirit so as to *enjoy* Christ, that He may dwell in their hearts by faith, &c. At the close of the epistle, when he thinks how Satan opposes the saints, and tries to hinder their standing in the new place God has brought them into in heavenly places in Christ, the apostle most earnestly urges the saints to habitual and continual dealing with God in prayer, and that not for themselves only, but for every member of the body, and for the gospel too. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; and for me that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make

known the mystery of the gospel, &c. (Eph. 6:18, 19).

In Philippians, where the prominent subject is devotedness, we might expect something about prayer, and so there is. In Phil. 1:4, Paul assures their hearts that he makes request for them with joy always, and in every prayer; and in Phil. 1:19 he counts also upon their prayers. He told them that he prayed definitely for two things; 1st,

That their love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

2nd,

That they may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God (Phil. 1:9-11).

In the fourth chapter, the saints are enjoined to pray about everything, as one of the necessary ways of enjoying the peace of God. So free is the child of God to feel, that he is to keep back nothing, but make known his requests to God. God does not say He will answer every request, but it is clearly His will that we should tell them out before God.

In *everything* (great matters, or very small, as we call them) by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God (Phil. 4:6, 7).

In the epistle to the Colossian saints, the apostle assures them that he was praying always for them (Col. 1:3), and details some of the points he brought before God on their behalf. As usual, they are most definite, pointed, and brief.

(1) For *knowledge* of God's will being wisely and spiritually entered into, in order

(2) to *walk* worthy of the Lord;

(3) to be strengthened with all might according to the power of the glory;

(4) that they might be *giving thanks* to the Father for having made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. (Col. 1:9-12).

He exhorts them also to continue in prayer, to watch in the same with thanksgiving, and to pray also for him and others, particularly as regards the ministry of the word. Moreover, before concluding this short epistle, he refers to one who *labored fervently in prayer* for them.

Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, *always labouring fervently for you in prayers*, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God (Col. 4:12).

In the Thessalonian epistles, the apostle says that he made mention of them in his prayers, and that he continually and definitely asked, first, that God would count them worthy of this calling, and secondly, that He would fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ might be glorified, &c. (1 Thess. 1:2, and 2 Thess. 1:11, 12). He enjoins them also so to cultivate the habit of prayer, as to

pray without ceasing {1 Thess. 5:17},

and in both epistles asks their prayers for himself and fellow-servants, especially that

the word of the Lord might have free course, and be glorified {see 2 Thess. 3:1}.

In Paul's first epistle to Timothy, so important is the subject of prayer to his own soul, that he exhorts, first of all, that prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all in authority, &c., because it is good and acceptable in the sight of God and our Savior. He adds,

I will therefore *that men pray everywhere*, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting (1 Tim. 2:1-8).

He mentions also as one mark of a

widow indeed,
that she
continueth in supplications and prayers night and day {1 Tim. 5:5}.

He declares that food is

sanctified by the word of God and prayer {1 Tim. 4:5}.

In the second epistle to Timothy, we find Paul assuring him that he remembered him in his prayers without ceasing night and day. Let us think of this -- continually mentioning in prayer by name persons *night and day*. He prays also most definitely for the *house* of Onesiphorus, and that *he* may find mercy of the Lord in that day.

In Titus there is no direct reference to prayer, though it is a most practical epistle; not only does it correct various disorders then manifest, but most urgently enjoins godliness.

In the brief letter to Philemon, prayer is twice brought before us -- first, in the apostle's assurance to Philemon that he always made mention of him in prayer; and secondly, that he counted that through his {Philemon's} prayers he would be sent to tarry with him (Philemon 4, 22).

In Hebrews, we have the strong crying, supplications, and tears of our Lord, referred to in the fifth chapter; and in the last chapter the apostle so values prayer, that he hopes he may, through their prayers, be restored the sooner (Heb. 13:18, 19). This Scripture shows how graciously God owns the prayers of those whom He has put into the place of intercession for others, both by relationship and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

James, in his last chapter, gives us quite a treatise on prayer. He insists on the prevalent power of the prayer of *one* fervent soul, and names Elijah as an example, who was a man of like passions with ourselves. He enjoins us to pray for one another touching our faults; that the afflicted should give themselves to prayer; that in bodily sickness the elders should be sent for to pray over such, because the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and even if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven him. The statements in the fourth chapter,

Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts {James 4:2, 3},

are very striking and solemn.

In Peter's first epistle, saints are enjoined to

watch unto prayer {1 Pet. 4:7}.

They are reminded that God's

ears are open unto their prayers {1 Pet. 3:12},

and husbands and wives are exhorted to so dwell together

as heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered {see 1 Pet. 3:7}.

In the second epistle, the exhortations are more to pursue practical godliness in general with

all diligence {2 Pet. 1:5-8}.

John's epistles rather suppose those he addresses to be praying people than give much instruction on the subject. In chap. 5 of first epistle, speaking of

a sin unto death

(as for instance in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, when discipline unto death should take its course), he says,

There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it {1 John 5:16}.

In the third epistle he says,

I will (or I pray) that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth {see 3 John 1:2}.

Jude introduces the subject of prayer most pointedly. Looking as he does at the failure and ruin of the church, and its going on to apostasy and judgment, he contemplates some faithful ones standing outside, and characterized not only as being praying people, but as

praying in the Holy Ghost {Jude 20}.

In the Revelation, we read of the prayers of saints in the fifth chapter, and of incense offered with the prayers of saints in the eighth chapter. The book concludes with the Spirit and the bride crying, Come, Lord Jesus.

This brief glance at the apostolic writings furnishes us with abundant evidence of the high and important place that prayer and supplication held in former times. No doubt that intellectualism prefers theological research; but a *heart* taught of God not only feels its own need and poverty, but instinctively cries to God for itself, as well as cheerfully makes intercession for others. When this is lacking there must be serious soul-defect. We are all, no doubt, too much in the company of others, and too little alone with God. It is easy for most Christians to talk in the social circle; but often with what result? When we are really enjoying the Lord's presence, loving His truth, taken up therefore with His counsels, joys, and interests, we are not only drawn out in worship, but have a full tide of prayer for others; for the same blessed Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ and shows unto us, also gives us access, by Christ, unto the Father, and teaches us how to pray and what to pray for. Let the Christian reader ponder these things, and be assured that if secret prayer for himself and others be not the daily habit of his life, it is time to search and consider before the Lord why it is not.

"There is *an eye* that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;
There is *an ear* that never shuts,
When sink the beams of light.

"There is *an arm* that never tires,
When human strength gives way;
There is *a love* that never fails,
When earthly loves decay.

“That *eye* is fixed on seraph throngs,
That *arm* upholds the sky;
That *ear* is filled with heavenly songs,
That *love* is throned on high.

“But there’s a POWER which faith can wield,
When mortal aid is vain;
That eye, that arm, that love to reach,
That listening ear to gain.

“*That power is prayer*, which soars on high,
Through Jesus, to the throne,
And moves the hand, which moves the world,
To bring deliverance down.”

Articles from *The Christian Friend*

A Famine of the Word of God

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it (Amos 8:11, 12).

In time of plenty who thinks of famine? But famine sometimes succeeds plenty. It was so in Egypt. There were first seven years of plenty, and then seven years of famine; and all the plenty was forgotten when the famine consumed the land. So is it; sometimes with the ministry of the word of God. At a time when many honored servants of the Lord are actively engaged in ministering Christ to souls, there are few perhaps who consider the possibility of scarcity following the plenty. It may be that the greatest blessing that God gives to souls on earth is a plentiful and seasonable ministry of His precious word which testifies of Christ; and yet some of us can look back and see place after place where this was so, which has now become little more than a state of desolation and almost famine of the Word; so that those who are children of God are barely *existing* instead of being in holy liberty devoted to the Lord.

About this some believers may be ready to say, "If we are deprived of all the Lord's gifts, we still have the Bible." True; and we would add, "Ye need not that any man teach you"; for you have received the Holy Spirit, who can "guide you into all the truth"; and happy are those who thus find daily food for their souls. But there is another side to this. How many are there who read the Bible as a routine, and get nothing for their souls? Why is this? Are we not told that Moses and the prophets were read in the Jewish synagogue every sabbath-day? so that, with the Scriptures in their hands, and read at stated intervals, there was such a famine of the word of God, that they knew not Him of whom the Scriptures which they read spake, but actually fulfilled the same in condemning Him. Again, was not Nicodemus well-instructed in the facts and letter of Scripture? yet was he not ignorant of the foundation truth that a man "must be born again" either to "see" or to "enter into the kingdom of God"? And is it not in the present day most appalling, with so many Bibles and so many readers, to find so few who declare with divine certainty, founded on God's word, their present possession of eternal life; and fewer still who speak of God's word, because it testifies of Christ, being the daily food of their souls?

Is there not at this moment with many, and in many places, "a famine of the Word"? As in the time to which we have referred, those only who in their need had to do with Joseph had bread, so it is now. Christ is our Life-sustainer; and many are faint, and in perplexity and uncertainty, because they do not go

to Him to be nourished by His truth. As in olden time the people came to Joseph, saying, "Give us bread," so all believers have to learn that there is famine everywhere apart from the blessing of the greater than Joseph. We are told, "There was no bread in all the land; for the famine was very sore, so that the land of Egypt and all the land of Canaan fainted by reason of the famine

. . . And they came unto Joseph, and said, give us bread: for why should we die in thy presence? (Gen. 47:13-15).

Now Jacob was a man of faith, and he bitterly felt the lack of food. He wanted bread, and knew that it could only be obtained from One who was over all the land of Egypt, whatever the instrumentality might be that brought it. This Joseph was a remarkable type of Christ risen and glorified. He had been hated by his brethren, sold by them, falsely accused, put into a dungeon, and after he had been taken out of it was highly exalted. *Then* it was he became, by God's ordering, the dispenser of bread to *preserve life* -- a striking type of the Lord Jesus, our Life-sustainer. Jacob and his sons were objects of God's love and care, and they fainted for lack of "*corn*." They hungered for bread; nothing less than the bruised corn of wheat could satisfy and sustain them; nothing also could meet their need. Have it they must, if possible; for they were famishing; and it could be had only from the typically dead and risen Joseph. May we never separate the Scriptures from Christ, of whom they testify!

Are we, dear Christian readers, panting and longing for more of Christ? Is it Christ, or something else, we are so desiring? Is it with us a settled truth that Christ, whom we have joyfully known as the Savior of sinners, is the only food and Sustainer of our soul? And can this be enjoyed without personal intercourse with Him through the Scriptures?

It is a good sign when the believer hungers and thirsts for *more of Christ, and has to do with Him where He now is for present blessing*. Such prove that

He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength.

We may be sure that it is only by personal intercourse and communion with Him that we can be "strong in, the Lord and in the power of His might"; "strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus"; "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

Truly the famine is sore in many parts of Christendom. Many of God's children seem to be lean and *just existing*, without any power to step out in the ways of faith; and there is no hope of reviving in their souls but by having personally to do with Christ where He is. It is to be feared that many seldom read the Scriptures, and others make the serious mistake of reading the Bible as a formal routine, and rest in having done so, instead of through the Scriptures *having intercourse with the Lord Jesus where He is* -- "The old corn of the land." What then becomes us but to go to the true Joseph, saying, "Give us bread." Let us go hungry, faint, and needy, and He will not send us empty away; for it is still true that "He filleth the hungry with good things"; and "exalteth them of low degree."

Like dear old Jacob, you may not be in utter destitution. You may have some balm and honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds; but these things are not "corn," nor can they supply its place. You may perhaps see beautiful things in Scripture; you may have committed to memory some of the sweet incidents there found, be familiar with many of its remarkable historical records, have received solutions of what many call difficult passages of the Word, and know that you belong to God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Jacob knew that he was an object of divine love and care; but he also keenly felt that, good as "balm" and "honey," "spices" and "nuts," were in their proper places, they were not "corn," and could not satisfy his pressing need. He therefore said, "*Go again, buy us a little food.*" But about this the patriarch, like many now, made a grave mistake; for he did not imagine it was to be had "without money and without price."

It is true that, through the tender mercy and care of Joseph, it did not hinder food reaching them, nor did any of them conjecture why the money was returned in every man's sack. When, therefore, they next went for food, Jacob said,

Take a present of the best fruits in the land . . . and take double money in your hand; and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight (Gen. 43:11, 12).

All this shows how little they knew the heart of Joseph, or the goodness of God in sending him before them to *preserve life*. And is it not often the same now? Does not a legal spirit so invest some minds in having to do with our Lord Jesus for present blessing, as if His goodness could only flow to us on condition of something worthy of it on our part? But, like Jacob and his sons, such have to learn that He does not feed and sustain us because of our goodness or ability, but because --

"'Tis His great delight to bless us: Oh, how He loves!"

Yes, He freely and lovingly strengthens and cheers those who wait upon Him, and returns all thought of creature-righteousness into their own bosom. All He wants is a heart to have to do with Him; as He said, "If any man open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Be assured, beloved Christian reader, it is not the discovery of beautiful things in Scripture, the solving of intricate questions; but it is Christ, of whom the Word testifies, who is the food of our souls. It is not "a little balm" or "honey," "spices" or "myrrh," "nuts" or "almonds," that can sustain and nourish our souls, but "the old corn of the land" -- having *personally to do*

with Christ Himself, who is now crowned with glory and honor, and soon coming to receive us unto Himself.

Most surely we believe that with many *the famine is sore in the land*. The unbelief as to the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth, our need of Him, and the supposed competency of the natural mind for searching, receiving, and communicating the deep things of God, close the door of access to the true Joseph's store. It is when men and the world are rightly considered by us according to Scripture, and it is settled by us that there is nothing for our souls in what is seen and temporal, that we are in a state for looking to the fulness of Christ as the only source of supply for our spiritual necessities. When this is not clearly held, the believer easily glides into the refinements of the world for present comfort; such as science, literature, the fine arts, or its so-called innocent amusements, which are often stepping-stones to the coarser, and more absorbing and soul-damaging, departments of the world socially, commercially, politically, and religiously.

Our first pursuits in the morning generally indicate where our *hearts* are. The children of Israel had to gather their daily food before sunrise, or they would be too late; and if the believer can rise from his bed and go about the business of this life before he has looked up to the Lord, and turned to the Scriptures which testify of Him for renewal of the inward man, it is more than probable that his *heart* has got away from God. Nothing can possibly make up for a lack of food, for "Christ is all"; and those who really live upon Him can say, "Farewell to cold and dry formality and routine," can detach themselves from worldly religiousness and every false way, and say --

"None but Christ to me be given,
None but Christ on earth or heaven."

Do not many of the religious books of the day bear evident marks of a famine of the word of God? After reading pages, we have sometimes said, "There is no ministry of Christ here. Where is food for souls?" And why do we thus speak? Is it merely to expose the barrenness of the pages? Far be the thought; but rather to warn Christian writers and readers against wasting their time and energies and money in that which neither honors the Lord nor feeds souls. We are sometimes reminded of the prophet's words,

Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?
and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken
diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let
your soul delight itself in fatness (Isa. 55:2).

Oh, the untold blessedness of looking up without a veil to our Lord Jesus Christ on the Father's throne, who is Head over all to the Church which is His body, and finding joy, sustainment, and comfort in the contemplation of the infinite perfectness of His person, work, excellencies, offices, fulness, and glory, as revealed in Holy Scripture! Then our earnest cry will surely be

"Oh, fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee;
That, with Thy beauty Occupied,
We elsewhere none may see!"

We are convinced that it is not charity to refrain from looking this weighty subject fairly in the face. That Christians generally are longing after more of Christ, and that many of the books of the present day give a solid ministry of Christ to souls, we fear is far, very far, from being true; but until such is the

case all the efforts and devices put in action, and all supposed improvements as to organization, must utterly fail to supply that which *personal enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ only can give*.

The inspired prophecy of Amos to God's ancient people is very solemn: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a

thirst for water, but of *hearing the words of the Lord*: and they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro *to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it*" (Amos 8:11, 12).

The Christian Friend, 1884, pp. 76-83.

Atonement

"The day of atonement" had a very prominent place in the "feasts of Jehovah" which the children of Israel were commanded to observe. It was "an holy convocation" on the tenth day of the seventh month in each year. So important and solemn was it, when carried out according to the direction which Jehovah gave by Moses, that all in Israel were bound to cease from work, and to afflict their souls; or they would be destroyed from among the people. They were to look on, and see how Aaron, by the sin-offering and burnt-offering, made an atonement for all their sins. It was done "once a year" to typify that one sacrifice which Christ offered once for all.

In the chapter (Lev. 16) which gives the details of what was done on the great day of atonement, the word "atonement" occurs fifteen times; and the work is presented to us in three different aspects or parts of the one atonement -- propitiation, substitution, and acceptance. All were fulfilled in the one offering of Christ, for "it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." Thus by the atonement made by our Lord Jesus Christ we are brought to God in the perfect efficacy of His work, and accepted in virtue of His offering. We are thus entitled to present rest and peace as well as eternal glory, and our hearts are filled with thanksgiving and praise (Lev. 16).

1. Propitiation was for God, though about our sins. It is brought before us repeatedly in the New Testament, and always in reference to sins. "He is the propitiation for our sins"; God "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"; "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God to make propitiation for the sins of the people." Propitiation gives us the God-ward side of the finished work of Christ. (See 1 John 2:2, 4:9; Heb. 2:17.) As another has said, "God was not as a heathen god, one who had to be propitiated that He might not be against us, but He did require that righteousness and holiness should be maintained in the universe." Man had sinned, had rebelled against God, and dishonored His throne, which righteously called for the pouring out of divine wrath and judgment; and though God is love, and loves sinners, yet is He righteous and holy in all His ways. What was then to be done? for the claims of His throne in dealing with His creature man must be unsparingly met, and His righteousness and truth vindicated. God gave His Son. Divine love and wisdom brought in propitiation -- "not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Propitiation then met the claims of the throne of God as to our sins. Hence, in this, the first part of the work of atonement, the blood of the

sin-offering was carried by the high priest into the holiest of all -- the presence of God -- accompanied with a cloud of burning incense which covered the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, when Aaron took of the blood and sprinkled it with his finger *upon* the mercy-seat, and then sprinkled it seven times *before* the mercy-seat (vv. 12-14). The cloud of incense set forth the sweetness of the excellencies of Christ, and the blood the value of His atoning work for us in the presence of God. There was that now before the eye of God which spoke of propitiation for sins, of divine judgment, and blood-shedding for remission. Such was the type on the great day of atonement.

But when we look at the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom all these shadows pointed, we are taught that He "*once* suffered for sins," "died for our sins," rose again from among the dead, and went *into heaven itself by His own blood*, now to appear before the face of God *for us*. Christ is thus in heaven for us, the everlasting witness that propitiation for sins has been made; and the infinite and eternal efficacy of His blood is always before God. The claims of God's throne have, therefore, been righteously and fully met for all that come to God by Him; for Christ died for all. Because of this, God can now send out a world-wide message of forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation, and as "a just God and a Savior" welcome, and justify from all things, every one that believes in Jesus. As we have seen, the whole value of His accomplished work is always before God; for Jesus Christ the Righteous is there, and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world; so that God can now say, as to every sinner who comes to Him for salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, "Deliver him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom," or, as the margin reads, "an atonement." Thus, the believer has a place of perfect peace in God's presence in divine righteousness, and the gospel is sent freely to every creature under heaven.

2. Substitution is another aspect or part of the work of atonement. If *propitiation* fully met the claims of the throne of God, *substitution* fully meets our need, and purges our conscience. That another should suffer instead of the guilty, and atonement made thereby, was often taught by Old Testament types. In Abraham's offering up a ram *in the stead of his son* we have the idea of substitution; and in convicted ones bringing sin-offerings, laying their hands upon the head of the offering, and in this way, as it were, transferring their sins to it, then the victim killed, the blood sprinkled, and the fat burnt; and the word of God declaring that in this way atonement was made, and

on this account the offerer was forgiven, the blessed truth of substitution was plainly set forth. In this chapter we find two goats set apart for a sin-offering, and on the head of one of them Aaron laid both his hands, and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and sending him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness (Lev. 16:21). Thus we see in type all the sins of the people transferred to another and taken away. And in a coming age Israel's song of joy and deliverance will be, when calling to mind the sufferings and death of Messiah for their sins,

Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:4-6).

This is *substitution*. Jehovah laid the iniquity of His people upon Christ, and judged it all upon Him. God only could do this. He only could separate sins from us and lay them on Another. This He did to the praise of the glory of His grace. For this we praise Him now, and, in millennial days, Israel will triumphantly celebrate this goodness of Jehovah; for not only will they bless Jehovah because He forgiveth all their iniquities and healeth. all their diseases, but they will add,

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions *from us* (Psa. 103:3, 12).

They will see that their sins were taken by Jehovah from them and laid upon Christ, and that He was wounded and bruised for them. This is *substitution*; and the same principle of dealing with our sins is set before us in the New Testament. Our Lord said that His blood was; shed for many for the remission of sins. In the Hebrews we are told that Christ was once offered to bear the *sins of many*; and if an ancient prophet declared "He shall bear *their iniquities*," the apostle to the circumcision says,

Who His own self *bare our sins* in His own body on the tree by whose stripes we are healed (Matt. 27:28; Heb. 9:28; Isa. 53:11; 1 Pet. 2:24).

Here we have substitution plainly set forth. Our sins laid upon Jesus, He Himself bearing them, and we healed by His stripes. Elsewhere, we read that He "once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"; "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." So far we see how truly, the Lord Jesus Christ has been our substitute as the bearer of our sins, and also of the righteous judgment for which they called.

But He was not only "delivered for our *offences*," but He who knew no sin was "*made sin* for us," and so bore instead of us the judgment due to sin in the flesh -- our evil nature. Hence we are told that

our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.

After "the fat of the sin-offering" had been burnt upon the altar in token of God's estimate of the value of the offering, the flesh and skin and dung of the victim were carried outside the camp and then burnt all treated as unclean, thus plainly setting forth Christ "made sin for us," and coming under divine judgment for

us, when God condemned "*sin in the flesh*" {Rom. 8:3}. Thus the nature from which the sins sprang has been judged, and set aside righteously in divine judgment in the death of Christ -- "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [or by a sacrifice for sin] condemned *sin in the flesh*." Therefore we now have no place in the flesh before God. Christ having been raised up from among the dead and glorified, He hath sent forth His Spirit into our hearts. "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."

How truly then the type has been fulfilled in the atoning work of Christ, so that *all* our iniquities, *all* our transgressions in *all* our sins, are for ever gone by death and divine judgment; and a just God and Savior can say of all who believe, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:17), so perfect and real is the work of Christ *for* us. But this is not all. There is a third thing -- acceptance.

3. Acceptance. After Aaron had carried in the blood and sprinkled it *upon* and *before* the mercy-seat, and had come out and confessed, with hands laid upon the goat, *all* the sins of the children of Israel and sent him away, we are told that he took his burnt-offering and the burnt-offering of the people to make *an atonement* for himself and for the people. The burnt-offering was a sweet-savor offering; it was not, therefore, about sins, like the sin-offering. Yet, we find it was killed, the blood sprinkled, etc.; and though the offerer laid his hands upon it, it was not, as in the sin-offering, to typically transfer the sins of the offerer, but to identify himself with its acceptability. We read, therefore, in the inspired account of the burnt-offering, "it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." Atonement then in its application includes the precious truth of acceptance by virtue of Christ. The offerer was accepted with the burnt-offering. This is no doubt why it was offered after propitiation and substitution had been plainly set forth. The burnt-offering was most acceptable to God. All was burnt on the altar to be a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord. So the death of Christ, under the searching power of divine judgement, showed the perfectness of obedience, love, faith, and entire surrender to the will of God in the most trying circumstances, and was infinitely acceptable to God. In it God found a savor of rest; and as what the Savior did was for us, as well as for the glory of God, it is accepted for us. Thus the believer, by the atoning work of Christ, is not only delivered in righteous judgement from guilt and condemnation, but he is brought to God, and has a place always before him of acceptance in virtue of that one offered, which was once offered.

Our faith and hope then are in God. It was God who sent His own Son; it was God who delivered Him up for us all, who raised Him up fruit, among the dead, and glorified him as man; at His own right hand. It is God who still sends forth the glad tidings of eternal salvation by Christ alone; it is God that justifieth the ungodly who believe; it is God to whom we are now brought through faith in Christ Jesus; it is the love of God which is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us; it is God who keeps us by His power through faith unto salvation; and it is His Son from heaven for whom we wait to take us to the Father's house, to be for ever to the praise of His glory.

Building Up Yourselfs

Believers instinctively feel the need of being edified or built up. Their souls look for food, and they are conscious that their inward man requires renewing; they therefore desire to know the things of God as set forth in the Scriptures of truth for their profit and blessing. But all have to learn on the principle that God is the Giver, and we are only receivers; that we have nothing in ourselves, and yet possess all things in Christ.

There are three ways in which edification or building up is presented to us in the epistles.

1. We have gifts of teachers, pastors, etc., from Christ in ascension for the perfecting of the saints, with a view to the work of the ministry, with a view to the edifying or building up of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:12).
2. We have the healthful exercises of the different members of the body, fitted together, and connected by every joint of supply as from the Head, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Eph. 4:16).
3. We have self-edification, or building up, on our most holy faith (Jude 20). It is this third character of building up which we judge to be of such importance at this time, and on which we propose to offer a few remarks.

It is often the case that where there has been the most faithful and most spiritual ministry of the truth there are those who have profited but little by such advantages. Now why is this? Is it not because they, if exercised about it, have trusted to be built up by others, and neglected self-building up? Few of us gather up lasting profit from any ministry, however excellent and spiritual, unless we receive the truth, not as we would an ordinary matter of instruction, but from the mouth of God, after having been assured it is according to His word. When there is the absence of such exercise of soul before God, it not only betrays a serious lack of spiritual mindedness, but also that there is no small amount of carnal confidence -- a self-sufficient competency for attending to the things of God instead of a lowly state of dependence on the Lord. We do well to lay it to heart as to whether we are *intellectually* dealing with divine truth, or being led and taught by the Spirit of God, and hearkening to what He saith.

It should be a daily question as to how much we are occupied in building ourselves up on our most holy faith. We all know as regards our bodies the need of continual cleansing, taking in frequent supplies of nourishment, protecting ourselves from bad external influences, and of availing ourselves of seasonable refreshment and comfort. But what about our souls? Are we hating the garment spotted by the flesh? Are we carefully seeking to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, and purposing not to touch the unclean thing? Is self-judgment before God habitual with us, because we exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward man? Do we go to the word of eternal truth morning by morning; read, meditate on it in dependence on the Spirit; pray over it, and take it in as food for the

renewal of our inner man? Do we hide the word of God in our hearts that we may not sin against Him? Do we thus have to do with "God, and the word of His grace," which is able to build us up, and throughly furnish us unto all good works?" Do we seek in this way to gather strength, so that *faith* may grow, *love* abound, and *hope* be increasingly brightened? If so, then it may be that we are building up ourselves on our most holy faith. And we may be quite sure that those who are building up themselves will greatly value being built up by others, and be profited by their divinely-given ministrations.

Moreover, this exhortation as to building ourselves up, occurring in Jude, seems to carry with it a loud voice to such as, in these last days, have taken the way of faith in a day of evil; for Jude traces the ruin of the Church from its commencement, leaving it as God's corporate witness on earth going on to judgment, without the smallest hope of reconstruction, or of general recovery; and, at the close, he addresses himself to such as are standing for God in this time of declension and failure. He says, "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith." A people true to the Lord in an evil time are thus recognized, and called to be diligent in building up themselves. The faith too is not spoken of here, as at the beginning of this brief epistle, as "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," but as "your most holy faith." Yes, it is that divine revelation of truth which specially refers to its. It is your faith, and it is "most holy." It is not merely that we should be holding a set of principles or doctrines; but taking into our hearts the ministry of the exceeding riches of divine grace, the actings of divine righteousness, and the almightiness of divine power, which are to us-ward in the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit to abide with us for ever. We are thus delivered from the authority of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love, and by the Spirit united to Him where He now is. A work has been wrought by Him who not only died for our sins, but died to sin, which has set us free for ever from the guilt of sins, and also from the dominion of sin; has delivered us from our old standing in Adam, and has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus -- we are thus brought into a totally new position -- *in* whom we have redemption *through* His blood, the forgiveness of sins; so that now, in Christ Jesus, we who some time were afar off *are* made nigh *by* the blood of Christ, brought into favor in the Beloved, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ; so that we are always before God in the cloudless favor, nearness, and acceptance of Christ. Brought into relationship with the Father as His children, with Christ as members of His body, and with the Holy Ghost as His temple, our fellowship by the Spirit is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. The nature of God being now revealed in light and love, we walk in the light as He is in the light, where His eternal redemption has brought us. How true it is that we have received abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, and

shall reign in life with Christ.

From this mere glance at the truth, is it any marvel that it is called “your most holy faith”? Can any blessing known on earth exceed this? Every step too of our onward path has been considered, and every possible contingency provided for in the accomplished work and present offices of Christ; so that we can rejoice in hope of glory as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and wait for God’s Son from heaven. No doubt “the faith” is the common property of all believers. “The faith which was once delivered unto the saints” -- not even delivered to apostles, but delivered unto the saints for their common blessing. And it is our faith, that which more particularly concerns us, and ministers to us -- “*your* most holy faith”; that wonderful revelation of divine grace, which could not have been made known till Jesus had come and declared the Father, and, according to His counsel and purpose, had accomplished redemption, and had gone back to the Father; and, in ascension as Man glorified, been given to be Head over all to the assembly which is His body, and had received and sent down the Holy Spirit to form the assembly on earth; for “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13).

It is then on our most holy faith we are to build ourselves up, by meditation on the word of God, under the guidance and teaching of the Spirit, and making it our own, by mixing faith with this divine testimony. The oft-repeated question therefore should be with every believer, “How much have I been occupied this day in building up myself?” for “the inward man is renewed day by day.” No doubt such will be prayerful too. Hence it is added, “Praying in the Holy Ghost”; for they own the Spirit. And where there is reality, those who pray will be satisfied with nothing less than praying according to the leading and desires of the Holy Spirit, which we know will always be according to the truth. Keeping ourselves also in the love of God is indispensable; for all our peace and strength flow from the consciousness that we are objects of divine love; and, while thus exercised, we can be looking for mercy till the Lord come -- “looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.” Where there is the absence of building up ourselves, we must not be surprised if prayer declines, if the enjoyment of the love of God be little known, and the expectation of our Lord’s mercy becomes dim. It is easy to go on in a routine of outward order and thus have credit among Christians; but what is it all worth if the Lord has not our hearts, and we are not building up ourselves on our, most holy faith? How ready every believer must be in the contemplation of these things to cry out, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe!”

We can scarcely think of any who are really building themselves up who can be careless as to obedience to the word of God. How could it be, if we are going on with God? For have we not conditional blessings set before us in Scripture? For example, are not those who, because they are God’s children, refuse to be yoked with unbelievers, and are separated from what is “unclean” for the truth’s sake, taught to look for the Father’s care and blessing? But what of those who do not take this place of separation in obedience to His word, but are more or less “yoked” with those they know are “unbelievers”? Is it not often manifest that they have not in

their souls the joy of relationship with the Father; and, instead of God’s blessing, find many of their plans frustrated, and their expectations never realized? They have been hoping to have the Father’s blessing without walking in obedience to His will. The same thing is true as regards the world. We are told,

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Even a child of God will not have the enjoyment of this precious relationship with the Father, if his heart goes after that which is contrary to His mind, and loves that which is under His judgment; for Jesus said, “Now is the judgment of this world.” But Where there are those who refuse to be “yoked” with unbelievers, not only as regards marriage, but also as regards everything else (while always ready to do good unto all men), but come out from among them, and refuse all unclean associations, then such consciously fall into their Father’s arms, enter into this most dear relationship, know that He receives them, and taste, and enjoy His blessing. They find those precious words fulfilled in their happy experience,

I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 4:14-18).

Christ and the Assembly; Or, Gathered {Together} to His Name and Keeping the Spirit's Unity

Matt. 18:20; Ex. 4:3

The Lord Jesus Christ is everything to those who know Him. His very name is as ointment poured forth. Where He is not, they find no rest; and apart from Him, life to them is not life. In Him divine and human perfectness shine forth. In Him we see and know the Father. Through Him the fountain of "perfect love" is ever flowing to us. In Him we have the One, who, at the priceless cost of the sacrifice of Himself, removed everything that hindered our being forever happy in the cloudless presence of God. In Him, and through His precious blood, we gratefully own that God is for us, God is our Justifier, God is our Father, who loves us as He loved His Son, who hath made us accepted in the Beloved, sealed us with the Holy Spirit, blessed us with "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places," and given us the hope of eternal glory.

Seeing, then, that divine love has thus blessed us, and united us for ever to our Lord Jesus Christ, is it to be wondered at that His name is given to us as the only center of our being gathered together on earth? And when we now think of Him in the glory of God, is it surprising that He should say, for the blessing of those so gathered, "There am I in the midst of them"? Certainly not. Should we not rather say, How can He fail to take His place "in the midst" of those whose hearts are drawn together in His precious name, and who are objects of His eternal, unchanging, and redeeming love? And do we not see how dear to His heart must be such a gathering, which causes Him to take His place "in the midst"? Can anything on earth equal it? Is it possible that any other congregation under the sun can be comparable to it?

It is clear that those only who know the love of Christ as having washed them from their sins in His own blood, can really be attracted by His name, or gathered together around Him. The first time we have it recorded of our Lord's being in the midst of His disciples after His resurrection, we find that the first words He spoke to them were, "Peace be unto you; and He showed them His hands and His side." This assured them of everything having been removed by Him, through the work of the cross, that hindered their being happy in God's presence. Peace had been made by the blood of the cross, and now they were to know it, and be happy in Him who had made this peace. The One who was in their midst had removed all guilt and fear, and assured them of such newly-formed and settled relationships, as to say, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." They were thus set free for holy and happy occupation with Himself. "Then were the disciples glad when *they saw the Lord*" (John 20:19). This is surely the true secret of joy.

The Lord also communicated to them life in the Holy Ghost -- risen life -- which He now had as raised up from among the dead, and which could not have been given to them before. Whatever might have been the character of the life believers had before this, we find now One able to breathe on them risen life --

He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost {John 20:22}.

But with this, let us not fail to observe, they were still to tarry in Jerusalem until they had "power" by the Holy Ghost coming upon them. (See Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8.) This coming of the Holy Ghost Himself to abide with us forever, took place, as we know, on the day of Pentecost, after Christ was exalted to the right hand of God. But Christ risen and breathing on His disciples *before* He ascended, was a different thing. The Holy Ghost came in consequence of Christ being *ascended*; a point never to be forgotten, because the formation, endowment, power, and blessing of the Church of God on earth are connected with Christ in Glory. All our blessings are, no doubt, founded on the work of the cross, but they come to us in association with Christ exalted to the right hand of God. It was *there* He was given to be Head over all to the Church, which is His body; *there* He received the Holy Ghost and sent down to us; *thence* He gave "gifts" for the building up of the body; *there* we now know Him as the "head"; from whom blessing flows to every member of the body; and from *thence* we look for Him to come.

Before He breathed on His *disciples* here gathered (for there were not only the eleven, but others were also present with them, perhaps all the hundred and twenty, except Thomas -- Luke 24:33), He sent them all forth into service and testimony, saying, "As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," and their understandings being opened to understand the Scriptures, they had, in connection with their work on earth, authority to remit and to retain sins. This was afterwards carried out in acts of discipline. This forgiveness has been sometimes spoken of as administrative forgiveness. Acts of discipline on earth are, no doubt, ratified in heaven by the Lord, who is in the midst of them gathered together in His name. In Matt. 18:18-20, as well as here, binding in heaven what is thus bound on earth, is connected with the Lord Jesus Christ being in their midst, as was afterward so jealously guarded by the apostle at Corinth (1 Cor. 5:4).

It is to be feared that many believers in the present day go no further than this in their apprehensions of what is involved in being gathered together in our Lord's name. They know Him in the midst as the administrator of "peace," founded on His own finished work; they are conscious of the need of the Holy Ghost, they realize that they are here to serve Christ, and have power, as congregations, to remit or retain sins in discipline. But if they stop here, they are not really on assembly ground at all. In the twentieth chapter of John we have not yet the assembly formed on earth, for there was no Head in heaven, and "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." We have disciples, and the Lord in the midst, and a beautiful sample to us of what His gracious ways with such are. Before the coming of the Holy Spirit there were individual believers,

children of God, those whom Christ was not ashamed to call His brethren; but before Pentecost the assembly had not been formed. It was by the coming of the Holy Ghost that believers were united to Christ as members of "One body" -- "By One Spirit we are all baptized into "One body." We have union, not by faith, nor yet even in life, but by "One Spirit." Wondrous truth!

Therefore (Jesus) being by the right hand of God *exalted*, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear {Acts 2:32, 33}.

His coming is thus described:

When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4, 33).

This was the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Acts 1:5, 1 Cor. 12:13). This was the "power" they were told to wait for; and the sequel shows what a mighty power it was. The "One body" was now formed on earth; believers were united to Christ the Head in heaven by "One Spirit" Precious union! The power and operations of the "One Spirit" were at once seen in the fervent testimony of the saints, their being of one heart and of one soul, unselfishly and practically one; though, as yet, they had not the truth of the assembly revealed to them, nor did they intelligently know what keeping the unity of the Spirit was. In God's sovereignty and goodness this came out after (Eph.3).

But in considering the state of the Church on earth *now*, we have a very different aspect presented to us. More than eighteen centuries have passed since the Church was formed by the coming of the Holy Ghost. All was set up in truth and holiness; and though nothing can possibly alter the union between Christ the Head and the members of His body on earth, yet, as to its manifestation, it has so entirely failed that we now speak of the ruin of the Church, and the confusion in Christendom, because scarcely a vestige of the corporate reality is to be seen as it was set up. *God's* building still groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord in His sight; but when the assembly is looked at as in *man's* hands, where is now any thing like that which was set up at Pentecost? It is so far gone that, instead of finding now in a city one assembly as distinct from the world around, we find saints scattered into sects, and, like the ruins of an ancient temple, many fragments buried in the pursuits and pleasures of the world that crucified the Lord of glory. The faithful therefore have now no resource but to go back to that which was from the beginning, not to reconstruct, which is clearly revealed to be not God's mind, but, while humbly acknowledging the ruin, to rely on the faithfulness of Christ to His own gracious word --

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt.18:20).

It is just here with many in the present day that the practical difficulty occurs. Some, for instance, contend that everything is so far gone that we have nothing left but thus to be gathered, and that we are under no obligation to Christ for the maintenance, as far as practicable, of assembly truth, as found in Ephesians and

elsewhere. This at once opens the door to the admission of what is unsuited to Him who is in the midst, gives up confidence in the never-failing faithfulness of God to His own word, the abiding of the Holy Ghost, the Lord's love and relationships to His own, and takes off our heart's interests and affections from the whole Church of God. It really sets up independency, because it ignores responsibility to the Lord to keep the Spirit's unity.

The question is, Can any be intelligently gathered together in the Lord's name, and own Him who is "in the midst," according to the truth, without felt obligation to Him to keep the Spirit's unity, so far as is practicable, and especially with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart? May all our consciences be solemnly exercised before the Lord about this!

1. First, let us enquire, In or unto whose name are we gathered? {Matt. 18:20}. Is it to His who is ascended, whom. God hath made both Lord and Christ? It was so in apostolic times; for they were gathered "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," and were instructed to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:4; Col. 3:17). It is surely with Christ in glory that we have now to do; though personally, at the right hand of God, He is in the midst of those gathered together in His name on earth. It is not only that the Holy Spirit is with us, for that He is always; but when the condition is fulfilled of being really gathered together in His name, then the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst of such. It is a precious fact, and blessedly known to faith by those who in heart and conscience are gathered to the Lord. Holding the principle is not enough, and saying we are so gathered is worse than useless, unless we know the reality of having to do with Him who is in the midst. The point is, Is *His presence* a real enjoyment to our souls?

2. He who is "in the midst" is the One who has accomplished eternal redemption, and went into heaven by His own blood. It is He who ascended unto His Father and to our Father, to His God and to our God, having made peace, and established the most endearing and everlasting relationships, so that our hearts are called out in praise and thanksgiving, and to wait for His return from heaven. How can we fail to praise? The question is, Are we thus praising, when gathered together in His name?

3. He who is "in the midst" has sent down the Holy Ghost, not only to teach us and to abide with us forever, and the *power* for all godliness, but He also came to form the Church or assembly on earth. "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." Believers are thus united to Christ -- one Spirit with the Lord. Can we then be taken up with Him who is in our midst, and forget that "we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones"? (Eph. 5:30).

4. He who is "in the midst" is "Head of the body, the assembly"; that is, not Head of that particular meeting, but of the whole body -- the assembly all over the world. As we have before observed, it was in ascension, and exalted above every name that is named, that He was given to be Head over all to the assembly, which is His body. Do we know Christ as Head of the body Are we "holding the Head?" not merely holding the doctrine that He is Head, but by faith "holding the Head"? Is it possible to be gathered to His name according to His mind without "holding the Head"? (Col. 2:1, 2, 19). May we fully face this important practical question?

5. He who is “in the midst” presents Himself to its also as “He that is holy, and He that is true” (Rev. 3:7). No doubt He is with us to reveal Himself lovingly and suitably according to our need; but He is also there to correct and discipline -- “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten”; “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord,” etc. (Rev. 3:19; 1 Cor. 11:30-32). His name surely calls for holiness and truth. Should we not then be careful what we associate with His name, who bids us to “touch not the unclean thing”? If He around whom we are clustered would have us so separate from evil as not to *touch*, not to be linked with what is unclean in His sight, how can we be gathered together in His name according to His mind, unless we are separate from unsound doctrine, immoral ways, and unholy associations? As to doctrine and practice we are warned of their insidious and spreading effects by the Holy Spirit, who says, “A little leaven leavens the whole lump”; and as to unclean *associations* (the last thing many consciences are moved by) we are to treat them as we would a leprous garment.

We are solemnly charged to “depart from iniquity,” and to *purge ourselves from vessels* to dishonor by separating from them. It may be said, “If we act in this way we shall find few will go with us.” Be it so, if it be the will of the Lord; but let us at all costs keep clear of associating with that peerless name anything which does not suit the “holy” and the “true.” Self-judgment according to His word, the cultivation of personal communion with Himself, and faithfully maintaining our place outside the camp to Him, is the path in which His gracious promise is fulfilled --

He shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work (2 Tim. 2:21).

How is it possible then to be gathered in heart and conscience to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to own Him in the midst according to His word, without felt obligation to Him to keep the Spirit’s unity so dear to His heart, and to stand for that holiness and truth which suit Him? May the “members of His body” be exercised before Him about these things, and, while seeking the path of faithfulness to Him, be heartily going out toward the whole Church of God.

The Christian Friend, 1884, pp. 177-186.

Christ Head of the Body

Among the many glories of the ascended Son of Man, we may think of Him by the teaching of Holy Scripture as “Head of all principality and power,” or as “Head of His body the Church” (or assembly). It is about the latter -- the present marvelous relationship of Christ in heaven to His saints on earth -- we would offer a few remarks as the Lord may graciously help.

And first of all let us not fail to notice that Scripture connects His headship to the assembly with His *ascension*; a point of moment not only as to accuracy, but as to its *effect* on our hearts when truly received, because it leads us to look to and have to do with Him in the place where He now is, as to everything connected with His assembly on earth. Poets have indulged the thought that the Head died for the members, but we know from Scripture that when here in incarnation He was all alone.

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone (John 12:24).

Nor could we scripturally speak of Him, as has sometimes been said, as our risen Head; for although when He rose from among the dead He gave “life more abundantly” -- risen life -- and announced the glorious facts that in virtue of what He had done believers were now His “brethren,” and brought into the same endearing relationship to the Father as Himself, He was *not then* given to be Head over His Church or assembly. There was as yet no Head, and consequently no members; the disciples were our Lord’s “brethren” and God’s “children,” but not yet members of His body. The body was not yet formed. “Go to my brethren,” said Jesus unto Mary, “and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to

my God, and your God” (John 20:17). This was very precious, but the body was not yet formed. Till Jesus had *ascended* there was no one in heaven who could be Head of the body. When man, in the person of the Son, went through death into the glory of God, and was set at “His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come,” then it was that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, gave Him to be “Head over all to the church [or assembly] which is His body.” Here then we are definitely taught that it was in Christ in *ascension* that we have the first idea of the Head of the body, till which time there could have been no members formed on earth. Nor, in point of fact, could the body be formed till the coming of the Holy Ghost, which the ascended One received from the Father and shed forth; because we are told that it is “by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body” (Eph. 1:19-23; 1 Cor. 12:13). We could not therefore scripturally speak of Christ as Head of the assembly in the days of His flesh, or when He died, or when He rose again. Neither could we speak of Him as our risen Head; but we can look up to Him where He now is, and there know among many other glories that He who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, who is our life, our righteousness and peace, is the Head of His body the Church, or assembly. For such grace we cannot but praise God.

When we think then of God’s assembly on earth, it always connects us with Christ in ascension. Thus we are a heavenly people; our life, blessings, inheritance, supplies, and home,

are there; so that we are partakers of a heavenly calling, and are taught to look for the Savior to change our body of humiliation, fashion it like His body of glory, and take us there. The consciousness of this will produce heavenly-mindedness, and ways.

The more we ponder the truth, the more shall we be struck with the precious fact that the whole economy of the assembly on earth flows from association with Christ in ascension. For example, if it be a question of gifts for edification, they are from Him who ascended up on high, who led "captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Eph. 4:8). If it be the apostolate of the Church we are considering, we find an entirely new order of apostles from that of the kingdom as appointed in the gospels, though many of them might have been the same men; for of the ascended Christ it is said, "He gave some, apostles . . . for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11, 12). Paul was, as all know, one of these apostles; and besides being a minister of the gospel, was especially distinguished as a minister of the Church or assembly (Col. 1:23, 25). We all know that Peter was an apostle of the kingdom, by our Lord's sovereign call and appointment when on earth; but we have only to view him in Acts 1, and then in ch. 2, where he is seen as an apostle from the ascended Christ, and in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and we cannot fail to be struck with the immense difference.

If the object and scope of Christ's present ministry from heaven be before us, then it will be found that it is for those who are, or who may be, while on earth, connected with the Head in heaven; as before observed, it is for "the building up of the body of Christ." Ascension then is peculiarly the word for those who, through grace, even now on earth are by the Spirit united to the Head in heaven, and oh, how marvelous! -- are "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." If our souls apprehended these things as they ought, we should easily see how dishonoring to our Lord it must be to think lightly of them, and how pleasing it is in His sight when our affections and interests are toward His saints as "members of *His* body" according to His mind, not only as the purchase of His own precious blood, but as one with Himself -- "of His flesh and bones" -- so that He could say to a persecuting Saul, "Why persecutest thou *me*?" May we ponder in our Lord's presence this "*me*," till we have something more of His own regard and care for His dear ones on earth! *Then*, and not till then, shall we be able to "endure all things for the elect's sake," and to see there could be no narrower limits to our love for each other than laying down our lives for the brethren. May the Lord stir afresh within us deep affections and suited ministries toward the members of His body!

We should never forget that "Head" and "members of the body" are relative terms. We cannot think of the Head without the thought of the members, neither should the thought of members of His body occupy us without thinking of the Head to which they are united; they must go together, for Christ is Head of the body. The "one new Man," which He hath "made in Himself of twain" (believing Jews and Gentiles), consists of Christ the Head in heaven, and believers on earth united to Him and to each other by one Spirit. It is therefore entirely

"new," not an improvement of the Jew's religion, but something which never was before, and never will be repeated; for it is "one," and yet a mystical body, perfect as consisting of Head and members, God's own workmanship, who hath "created us in Christ Jesus" -- One New Man. All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in this mystery. Perfect wisdom, intelligence, sufficiency of grace, and never-failing supplies of truth, and blessings treasured up in the ascended and glorified One who is Head of the assembly, whose love, and care, and sympathy are as to His own flesh, and who ever regards us as His complement, or "the fulness of Him who filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:23). What a marvelous union of Head and members is Christ and the assembly!

But He is not only Head of the body, He is also Head over all to the body. All her springs are in Him. He is to us the Fountain of living water. All our wisdom, all our strength, yea, all our resources, are in Him. Not only are we blessed in Him, accepted in Him, have redemption and are made nigh in Him and through His blood; but so truly are we the members of the one body with the Head, that all our endowments, all our ministrations, and all our sufficiency are in and through Him. And when this is truly apprehended as a divinely-given reality, it will certainly set us in the place of entire dependence on Him, as those who have nothing, and yet possess all things, even as when our being united to Him as members of one body to the Head first dawned upon the soul filled us with thanksgiving and worship.

Much failure was traced by the Spirit, when addressing the Colossian saints, to their "not holding the Head"; and no doubt very much that is wrong among believers in the present day may be traced to the same source. It is not that saints do not hold the doctrine that Christ is Head of the body, and speak of it in Scripture language; but "holding the Head" is much more than that. Those who are "holding the Head" are in communion with Him as to the members of His body. Their hearts and minds are interested in what interests Him. Their sympathies, affections, and care have no less a circle than "all saints." Such look at them, think of them, pray for them, and feel for them, in their measure, according to the mind, and heart, and care of the Head. It is impossible it can be otherwise if we are really "holding the Head." We believe there is no other prevention of, or cure for, sectarianism. When our hearts are really in communion with the Head of the body, we cannot be satisfied with a narrower circle than *all* the members of the body, or desire a larger circle for those deep springs and energies of the new life which we have in Christ, than the power and operations of the Holy Ghost who dwells in us. We repeat, it is much more than knowing the doctrine, and we believe it will be known in power by those only who have a conscience toward the Lord as to being in communion with Himself concerning the members of His body. We add that it has long been our conviction that many who resolve, and exhort others also, to cultivate a catholic spirit, and who desire to have no less scope for their interest and service than the whole Church of God, yet never become disentangled from a sectarian spirit on the one hand, or from being latitudinarian on the other, because they do not accept in simple faith what the Spirit teaches, that "holding the Head" is the divine way, and

only true way, whereby such desires can be accomplished. We cannot see how it is possible to be right with the “members of His body,” unless we are right with “the Head”; nor can the true liberty which the Holy Ghost gives be known, in a day of ruin and in difficult times like the present, by such as are not “holding the Head”; for if we are truly in communion with Him, and in subjection to Him, the heart will be kept in freshness and care for “all saints,” even though circumstances necessitate that in loyalty to Him we walk in a narrow path.

Perhaps no one ever knew what it was to be “holding the Head” better than the apostle Paul. Not only was he arrested by the wondrous revelation that Christ in heaven was one with His saints on earth, but to him was revealed the mystery of the assembly, and he was also made a minister of the assembly; and we can in some measure imagine what the effect of all this on his life and walk must have been. He writes to some believers whom he had not seen, “We are praying always for you”; and he desired they might know the conflict, or agony, he had for them, lest they should not intelligently and heartily acknowledge the mystery of God, and thus fail to answer to the Lord’s mind of “holding the Head,” and of being knit together practically in the membership of the body -- for such is the great characteristic of Christianity. He could say to others,

I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ;
to others,

Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith.

He wept over others because they were dishonoring the Lord. The members of the body were so dear to him, that he suffered trouble and endured all things for the elect’s sake, and said, “I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body’s sake, which is the assembly.” So much was the welfare of the whole Church of God upon his heart, that he not only prayed for all saints, but could truly say, “Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?”

There is another point, never to be forgotten, as to the Head of the body, the assembly. It is that all the comfort, edification, and growth of every member flow *from* the Head. It may be *through* gifts, or such other members of the body as are neither pastors, teachers, nor evangelists, but in other ways, by joints and bands, and the different healthful exercises of the members according to their measure, and the grace given unto them, and the working and power of the Holy Spirit. No doubt all believers know that their blessings come to them in and through our Lord Jesus Christ; but here it is Christ the Head ministering in every way to His members, in the perfectness of love. He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. He is now sanctifying and cleansing it with the washing of water by the Word, and in a little while He will present it to Himself a glorious assembly, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. How unspeakably dear to His heart must every member of His body be! What favor we all must have in His eyes! How precious to Him must the feeblest be!

“Oh, yea! Christ loves His Church,
‘Tis her He lives to bless;
He cannot love her more,

Nor will He love her less
Bone of His bone, cleansed by His Word,
A bride adorned meet for her Lord.”

There is, then, a constant ministration of grace and truth from the Head to all the members of His body; and as we are in communion with Him, “holding the Head,” we shall be conscious of this living blessing from Him who nourisheth and cherisheth the assembly. But if the busy workings of unbelief, self-importance, and unjudged evil in words and ways come in, can it be otherwise than the grieving of the Holy Spirit, and the lack of comfort and edification to those who are so dear to the Head? When, however, in simple, childlike faith we are “speaking the truth in love,” we shall surely grow up to Him in all things who is the Head, Christ,

from whom the whole body

(observe, *the whole body*, not one member excluded)

fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Eph. 4:16).

(See also Col. 2:19.) In this way we may expect growth and the increase of God. The difficulty is to seize and carry out this great principle of divine truth in a time of confusion and evil; but if only two or three are faithful to the Lord, and honor His name and word, such will in a very especial way have His presence and blessing, as many have proved. But let none expect, however well instructed they may be in Scripture knowledge, to have that communion with the Lord they desire, or to know His present mind, unless they are “holding the Head.”

The Christian Friend, 1885, pp. 216-224.

"Do All in the Name of the Lord Jesus"

Col. 3:17

It is certainly important, when meditating on any portion of the word of God, to trace its connections, in order to apprehend the meaning intended in the passage by the Holy Spirit. For instance, looking at this verse alone, it would appear to set before us a hard task, which after all may be but feebly accomplished by us, and thus turn the mind in upon itself, and bring us into a legal state. On the other hand, to be occupied only with the *grace* side of divine teaching, most blessed as it is, to the neglect of *preceptive* truth, will generally be connected with a low and careless walk. In our Lord Himself, the perfect One, *grace* and *truth* were always fully manifested and perfectly acted out. He was "full of grace and truth." A considerable part of this epistle to the saints at Colosse was written before this precept was given. In the portion which precedes it, blessed truth had been set forth to engage the believer, and to cheer and exercise his heart before God. Let us briefly look at a few points.

In the first chapter, those who had faith in our Lord Jesus and love to all saints, the two marks of genuine conversion, were enjoined to be "giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," who has delivered, translated, redeemed us, etc. Being now children of God, knowing God as their Father, they were to approach Him as His children, and give thanks to Him for having made them fit for glory; to praise Him for "redemption," for having "delivered" them from the power of darkness, "translated" them into the kingdom of the Son of His love, and made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. What holy liberty is found here! What an unending source of joy! Objects of the Father's love, the costly work of eternal redemption wrought by the only begotten Son, and brought into such new and endearing relationships, they were to know that the Father loves them as He loves His Son. How fruitful in blessing to our souls to be thus consciously set by divine grace, divine righteousness, and divine power on the ground of never-ending thanksgiving before God our Father! Is it then our *habit* thus to be before God? Because, if we have not accepted and made our own by faith the instruction of the first chapter, how can we possibly carry out the precepts of the third chapter? How can we walk as God's children unless we know we are His children? And how can we be giving thanks to the Father for our new position, relationships, security, and meetness for glory, unless we have received as from the mouth of God His own precious and infallible word as to these things? When everything else is discarded as authoritative but the word of God, and faith is mixed with it, as giving us divine certainty, then we prove the fulfilment of our Savior's words, "The truth shall, make you free."

Again, in the beginning of the third chapter, the apostle teaches these young believers that, they are; "risen with Christ." Now what do we understand by this? Is it not that,

having been quickened and associated in life with Christ, who is here spoken of as "our Life," we have the life of One who is risen from among the dead? ¹ Is it not thus a new and an eternal life, the free gift of God to us in our Lord Jesus Christ? Not, surely, a prolongation or an improvement of natural life, but a new and risen life, which is totally outside the old creation. Jesus said,

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:24);

that is, that blessing to others in living association with Himself must follow His death, for until that He was "alone." Thus we are plainly taught that, though He was that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us, He was alone till after His death, even as the grains in the ear are the result of the corn having fallen into the ground and died. So Christ, as He now is risen from among the dead, is our Life; for "God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son," so that believers are "risen with Christ" Happy are those who have accepted in simple faith this revelation of divine; grace! To such it becomes easy and natural to have their minds set "on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." It calls for no effort; for being set thus in association with Christ forever by God, who raised Him up from among the dead, and assured too that when Christ, who is our Life, is manifested in glory we shall be manifested with Him, our minds and hearts are attracted by such love and blessedness to where He, our Life, now is. The important question, therefore, for each of us is, Have I accepted as God's truth such wondrous blessing, and thus made it my own for present enjoyment? What a precious thing for the soul to know, on the authority of the word of God, and entirely of His own free grace and power, that I am connected with Christ in resurrection life, and, we may add, forever united to Him where He is by the gift and indwelling of the Holy Spirit!

In the second chapter, another view is presented to us of the present blessing into which the believer, through grace, has been brought. In the ninth verse the glory of the person of the ascended Savior is presented to us as Man, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells -- man surely glorified and sitting on the Fathers throne, yet verily and truly divine in the absolute sense, the very "fulness of the Godhead," yet one glorious person who is spoken of as "*Him*," and that *He* as to His exaltation is "the head of all principality and power." And

1. This is important, and the reader will not fail to perceive that this truth follows upon our being dead with Christ (chap. 2: 20), so that, as another has said, "we are viewed, not merely as quickened by the Son, but as dead and risen with Christ, the Man who had died, so as to have passed out of -- put off -- the old standing of a child of Adam, and into a risen one with Christ -- put on the new man." Ed. of *The Christian Friend*.

marvelous as it is, we are told that, as redeemed ones, our present place before God, given us by His grace, is filled full, or "complete in Him." Observe, it is what we are, not in ourselves, but "in Him." As another has said, "The fulness or completeness of the Godhead is in Christ, as toward us; and we, as toward God, are complete in Him." Into what an amazing position of blessing the grace and power of God have thus brought us, as true of us now, in all the acceptability and nearness of Christ -- filled full in Him who is sitting on the Father's throne, angels, authorities, and powers being subjected to Him. Let us ponder this heavenly position and blessedness well, and instead of reasoning about it, and missing its everlasting consolation, receive it with faith, and enjoy this present nearness and blessing God has given us. Does the Word say you shall be, or you may hope to be, filled full? Nay; it says, "Ye are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." And so true to faith is this new place before God in Christ risen and ascended, that before our verse occurs the believer is spoken of as having put off the old man with his deeds, and having put on the new; that is, the old man (not the sins, but sin, or the old nature that bore the corrupt fruit), having been substitutionally and judicially put off in the death of Christ, when we died with Christ, and God having, as we have seen, given us a new place through the resurrection of Christ, and a new nature, or life in Christ, we cannot be other than in Him who is our life. Hence it is said, "Ye are complete in Him," and faith takes it, and knows no other life or position; therefore we are spoken of as having put off the old man and put on the new.

But the point of such moment at this time is, Have we received these precious truths into our hearts in faith as divinely-given communications for our present comfort and profit? It is one thing for the reader to be so struck with them as to admire them, but it is a totally different thing to receive them without any hesitation and have the certainty that these blessings are ours now. Almost everything around is being shaken, and questions on every hand are being raised as to the divine and eternal verity of Holy Scripture, so that multitudes of professing Christians are indulging misgivings, and having almost endless disputes, when, if the word of God were simply bowed to, there would be certainty and rest. Unless one has the assurance founded on the work of Christ, and confirmed by the unalterable Word, that he is a child of God, how can he be giving thanks to the Father, and walk as a child of God? And unless he has to do with the Lord Jesus Christ on the right hand of God, as the One in and through whom he has redemption, and in whom he is filled full, how can He so be the central object of his thoughts and affections as to say and do all in His name? We hold it to be simply impossible. But being consciously before God as His child, filled full in Him who is seated on His own right hand, He in us our life and we risen with Him, who has redeemed, delivered, and translated us, and who is made unto us righteousness, it becomes quite intelligible that those who are thus abiding in the cloudless favor of God will be giving thanks to the Father, the source of all, be having their minds set on things above, where Christ sitteth, in whom and through whom they have all, and happily fall in with the suited exhortation, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all

in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." What we cannot truly associate the name of our Lord Jesus with must therefore be avoided.

Let none of us imagine, that because we see the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to be the only scriptural center of being gathered together, we are therefore out to Him. When He is really the central object of our hearts, how can we desire otherwise, as constrained by His love, than to do all in His name? Is it not our chief joy that He should be magnified? And will not "giving thanks" accompany such service? For how can we be taken up with Him, without praise and thanksgiving going up from our hearts "to God the Father by Him"? May the Lord keep us, and be our constant helper.

The Christian Friend, 1886, pp. 97-102.

On Ministering Christ

The Scriptures testify of Christ. Our Lord said, "They are they which testify of me." Whatever else they may set forth, it is clear that the great subject of God's revelation to man is Christ Jesus the Lord. In various ways, by many instruments, at different times, and under manifold circumstances, the divine glory of His person, His perfect manhood, His moral excellencies, His infinite perfections, His finished work, His fulness, and His offices are blessedly presented to us in the Scriptures of eternal truth.

In our Lord's personal ministry, wherever He was, He declared the Father, and so perfectly showed in His ways and words the characteristics of Him who sent Him, that He could truly say at the close, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"; and His dealings with those around manifested that He was "full of grace and truth." Instead of casting out any sinner who came to Him, He opened wide His arms, and said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He plainly declared that He was the only Savior of sinners, and the Refuge and resource for His own loved disciples.

While constantly insisting on the divine authenticity of Scripture, and declaring that "the Scripture cannot be broken," He was Himself the living expression of it. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. In the sacred writings, as the fitting occasions came, He was presented as the woman's Seed that should bruise the serpent's head, the Seed of Abraham; and yet He could most truly say, "Before Abraham was I am"; the virgin's Child, and yet Emmanuel; the Son given, and yet the perfect Man. Scripture spake of Him as David's son, and yet being David's Lord; the offspring of David, and yet the root; Son of man, yet Son of God. There we read of Him as the Prophet that was to be raised up, the Priest after Melchizedek's order, and the King who shall yet sit on the throne of His father David, and reign over the house of Jacob for ever, of whose kingdom there shall be no end. Songs of triumph and of joy referred to Him; prophets testified by the Spirit of His sufferings, and the glories which should follow; and we know that "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Scripture also teaches us that in the man Christ Jesus eternal life has been manifested, divine love has been manifested, and God has been manifested. By Him God's ways have been vindicated, His counsels and purposes have been and will be carried out, His word fulfilled, His truth established, His righteousness perfectly met, the holy demands of His throne fully answered. There we behold Jesus, when in the path of deepest suffering, even when forsaken of God, glorifying Him with perfect obedience, perfect love and perfect faith. There on the cross was the entire surrender of Himself, and a complete answer to every claim of divine justice on account of our sins. All was divinely perfect, so that at the end of the solitary way He could say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

Again, when in company with the evangelists who were inspired to mark out for our comfort the footprints of His blessed path, He is sometimes brought before us as compassionately satisfying hungry thousands with a few loaves and fishes, with

abundance of broken food left; and yet He deigned to accept the ministry to Himself of certain women of their substance. We look with wonder at Him at one moment, as the One who carried our griefs, weeping with the sorrowful and bereaved; and at another, raising the dead as "the resurrection and the life." Again we see Him weary and asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship, and when awakened by His distressed disciples, commanding the stormy wind to cease, and the raging waves to be still. Yea, in every page of the inspired narrative enough is recorded to fill our worshiping hearts with wonder, love, and praise.

Again and again the written Word speaks of this spotless One, who was "separate from sinners," as having once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God; who came into the world to save sinners, and died for our sins according to the Scriptures. In life we see Him resisting Satan, overcoming him in every temptation, casting out devils with His omnipotent word, and through death destroying him that had the power of death. Mighty Conqueror! In His life the repeated testimony from heaven was, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And God's righteous estimate of His death was, that it entitled Him to the highest glory and honor; while the rent veil, the raising Him up from among the dead for our justification, and the gift to us of the Holy Ghost, most unquestionably show God's entire satisfaction with His atoning work on the cross for us. If we look at Jesus in His life, there is everything to win our hearts; and in His death, there is everything to meet our consciences. The perfection and glory of Himself fills our souls with joy; the value of His finished work gives us rest and peace. It is to Him, as Son of man, all judgment is committed, and to His name every knee must bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord; for He will yet, according to the working of His mighty power, subdue all things unto Himself.

Thus, whether we look at the typical days of olden times, at the many shadowy illustrations of a former dispensation, or at the Lord's own ways and ministry in the days of His flesh—whether we view Him in His life or in His death, it is Himself of whom the Scriptures testify, it is Himself who engages our hearts, it is Himself that is ministered to our souls; and though some parts of Scripture appear to the natural man to be only dry records of history, or details of long-forgotten ordinances, they are often round to the soul under divine teaching to be rich in comforting or in instructive ministrations of Christ to the heart.

If in life our Lord emphatically endorsed the writings of Moses as concerning Himself, if He quoted the Psalms of David as the Holy Ghost's testimony of Himself, and referred to the prophets as also having reference to Himself, the same was equally characteristic of His ministry to His disciples after He rose from the dead. He assured some that their mistake and folly arose from not believing all that the prophets had spoken, and He showed them that He Himself was the great subject of Old Testament revelation and ministry; for "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself." On another occasion He also said unto His disciples, that all things must be fulfilled, which

were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me (Luke 24). Thus He not only authenticates the Old Testament writings as a whole, but assures in that their ministry is concerning Himself.

And after our Lord had ascended, and the Holy Ghost had come down at Pentecost, and formed the Church -- the body of Christ -- though there was greater power with the Word, the ministry had the same characteristics the divine authority of Scripture, and their testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The books of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets were quoted by the apostles as a divine revelation and a divine ministration of Christ, so that those who heard their preaching, or read their writings, must have known that it was not merely something about Christ, but the ministry of Christ Himself to the heart by a power which brings home the blessedness of Christ, that takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. To their hearers they act forth His person, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification; they spake of the gift of the Holy Ghost, His Godhead, personality, indwelling, and operations as the glorifier of Christ, as well as the abundant love of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; while our Lord's coming again, His kingdom and reign, were constantly proclaimed. It was Christ they so presented to those to whom they ministered, that we are told that "they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." If Peter's line of things was the kingdom and Paul's the Church, they both enforced the divine authority of the word of God over the heart and conscience; and both set forth Christ. If Peter in his early sermons quoted from Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets, we find Paul reasoning "out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus," he says, "whom I preach unto you is Christ" He quotes from the Psalms when preaching at Antioch; and again we are told that he persuaded others "out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 17:3; 28:23).

It is scarcely necessary to refer to the epistles to trace how often the books of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets are cited by the apostles in their inspired writings, and that too as positively ministering Christ to souls. Even a careless observer of these writings scarcely fail to see that the great subject they present, whether occupied with the past, present, or is the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only is He to be seen as the light and glory of every page, but He is the all-attractive, all-sufficient Object set before us at us in every state, and to satisfy every need of our souls. Whether Peter, Paul, John, James, or Jude be the instrument, it is the blessed Lord of whom they write.

Nor is Christ less prominently set forth in the Apocalypse; for not only is the Lamb, and the value of His as blood, often made to pass before our spiritual but Christ as Son of man is seen judging the assemblies, and presented to each assembly according to its state, circumstances, and need. Though the book be a revelation for the most part of what had not been known before, yet the golden threads are so interwoven the testimony of Moses and the prophets that the spiritual eye fails not to perceive that the many books Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, form a marvelous whole, which, though written by many instruments, have emanated from an Omniscient and Almighty

How truly then do the Scriptures testify of and tell us that

which is concerning Himself! How clearly too it is manifest that the Holy Ghost, who moved men to write them, has therein been the glorifier and testifier of Christ!

The apostle Paul informs us that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). He therefore charges the faithful servant to "preach the word"; not traditions of men, but "the word"; not deductions from the word, however interesting, but "the word"; not opinions about it, but "the word"; the divine authority of the word of God which is for ever settled in heaven, and liveth and abideth for ever. That which is to be proclaimed (and especially because of the false teaching and fables which abound) is the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe. It is in fact the only basis for faith -- the incorruptible seed by which we have been born again, and the sincere milk by which those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious can be fed and grow thereby. Can there be, then, the ministry of Christ, if the divine authority of Scripture be not enforced? May the Lord graciously enable us so to love the word of God, understand it by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, mix faith with it, treasure it up in our hearts, and so prove it as to be able to help others effectually by it.

It is most interesting to observe that one result of our Lord's ministry after His resurrection from the dead, when their understandings were opened to understand Scriptures concerning Himself, was that it made them all happy. Whatever their mistakes, or state of soul had been, all were set right, and all were filled with joy in having to do with the Lord Himself. Not only did those who had been depressed and sorrowful exclaim, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us Scriptures?" "but it is said of the timid ones, who had been fearing the Jews, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." When affrighted ones are told by Him that He was not a spirit, and He said, "It is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have . . . and showed them His hands and His feet," then we are told that "they believed not for joy, and wondered." happy did their precious Savior leave them when he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven," that we are told "they worshiped Him, and returned Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24). John too writes his first epistle to the saints that their joy might full. Peter speaks of those who, though "in heaviness through manifold temptations," were so believing Him whom having not seen they loved, as to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Paul enjoins the saints to "rejoice in the Lord always," and prays that the God of peace might fill them with all joy and peace in believing." Is it not clear, then, that one result be looked for, when Christ is ministered, is that souls made happy in Him? But how can we expect to be instrumental in filling others with joy, if we are not rejoicing in the Lord ourselves? A glance at some of the epistles is enough to show how fully and pointedly Christ was ministered in apostolic times, whatever might be the state or circumstances of the saints addressed.

John wrote at a time when the person of our Lord was blasphemously assailed, when there were many antichrists, many false prophets gone out into the world; and of others he had to

say, "They went out from us because they were not of us." And how does he begin his inspired letter? He begins by setting forth the divine and eternal excellence of the Son -- "that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Who was the eternal life with the *Father* but the *Son*? He then asserts the precious truth, that true Christian fellowship is "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" He repeatedly speaks of the Father, and of His love in bringing us into new relationships, and giving us eternal life in the Son, all founded on the work of the cross. He declares that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," and that if we sin, the Righteous One (Christ) is our Advocate with the Father, who is also the propitiation for our sins. He shows that those who are born of God do not practice sin; but, having eternal life, this life will be manifested in obedience, righteousness, and love.

Now it is easily seen that by this ministry of Christ, brought home by the power of the Holy Ghost, they would be delivered from a false Christ, by knowing the true One, of whom He speaks at the end of his letter as "the true God, and eternal life." By being established in their new and eternal relationships with the Father and the Son, and therefore with each other, they would be separated from false people and untrue associations; and by knowing they had eternal life in Christ, and the Spirit was given to abide with them, they would be encouraged in the life of obedience, righteousness and love. They would see that "he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk, even as He walked." It was certainly a most trying state of things, the blessed and effectual remedy of the Holy Ghost the suited and pointed ministry of Christ.

Look also at the epistle to the Hebrews. A very different state is here seen. They were in such a low condition as to be in danger of giving up Christianity returning to the Jews' religion. And how were they met? By the ministry of Christ; and remarkably out of their own Scriptures -- the books of Moses, Psalms, and prophets. The Son in His deity, as well as true humanity, was most blessedly brought before them in the first two chapters. He is seen to be greater than angels, worthy of more glory than Moses Aaron, Joshua, David, and even Abraham, so that all retire when the glory of His person is introduced, the brightest stars cease to shine before the rising of the sun. The eternal Son -- the heir of all things -- made all things, upholds all things, and is to have things put under His feet, is here brought out. He looked at before time, in time, and after time shall have passed away. His incarnation, life of sufferings and temptation, death, resurrection, glorification, and reign, when everything will be put under His feet, all pass before us. We see Him as the Purger of sins, the Captain of our salvation, the Destroyer of the devil, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, the Son over our house, the Forerunner who is for us entered, the unchangeable Priest after the order of Melchisedec, Leader and Completer of faith, the Mediator of the new covenant, and the Great Shepherd of the sheep, who was brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant; and we are assured that yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

We cannot fail to notice in what a variety of aspects the Lord Jesus is brought before the readers of this epistle, which no doubt is intended to teach us that we need the full revelation which God has given us of His own Son, and not merely to know Him as the

Purger of our sins. Why the glory of His person is so clearly and richly unfolded in the beginning is because the prominent point in this epistle is the perfection of the one sacrifice and unchangeable priesthood of Christ, as contrasted with the oft-repeated sacrifices and many priests of a former dispensation, which was a time of types and shadows of the substantial realities in Christ. When one grasps the truth of the infinite perfections and glory of His person, it then becomes clear that, in everlasting value is stamped on His work and offices. Thus the Hebrew believers were entitled to know that their sins were purged, and that God would remember them no more; that by that one offering they were purged worshipers, should have no more conscience of sins, and were perfected for ever. They had, as to God, liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; and as regards men, their place was with Christ outside the camp of formal religiousness, bearing His reproach, and, before the Lord comes, to be running the race of faith with patience, and looking to Him, at God's right hand, for all the sustainment and encouragement they need. Can we conceive anything more calculated to deliver souls from Judaism, and to set them right with God than this full and clear ministry of Christ? Well the writer ends his letter by enjoining them "to offer by Him (Christ) the sacrifice of praise to God continually," and not to forget "to do good, and to communicate"; "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

In the first epistle to the Corinthians a state very different from those we have considered meets us. We here see the assembly in the greatest disorder, with rife flagrant sins, and erroneous doctrine. A brief look into the inspired letter is enough to show how simply and -- as we learn from the second epistle -- how effectually it was met by the suited ministry of Christ. But first let us observe that the three things which marked the Lord's epistles to the seven churches in the Revelation were also carried out by the apostle here:

1st He approves in them everything he can;²

2nd He brings before them their evil ways and doctrine and

3rd He presents the remedy, which is found in having to do with Christ Himself, as set forth in Scripture.

And will not these points always characterize a divinely-given ministry to saints? The apostle knew well that "Christ is all," and that all our blessings are in Him, and through Him, and not at all after the flesh. He therefore addresses the Corinthians as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," where divine grace has set the feeblest believer. After having acknowledged thankfulness to God the grace given them by Christ their utterance, knowledge, and gifts, and their for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, he reminds them of God's faithfulness, and of His having them unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which is also true of every believer.

Having thus shown them that they are set apart for God in Christ, and called to have partnership with Christ in His

2. {Exception must be taken to this as regards Corinth and Galatia. In 1 Cor. 1, the apostle only commended what the grace of God had wrought in richly endowing them with gifts; he commended *nothing* in their walk. In Gal. 1 he *commends nothing at all*. This is because of the respective evils at these places -- moral and doctrinal. Let us learn from this!}

thoughts, love, joy, service, etc., he now turns to their faults. Having exposed the divisions among them, he meets all by bringing in Christ and His cross. He says, "Is Christ divided?" Are not all believers joined to the Lord one body? Then how can divisions be right? Can the human body be divided into parts, and still be in connection with the Head? "Was Paul crucified for you?" Then why take up his name? Then he refers to their boasted wisdom: "The Greeks seek after wisdom." The Corinthians were not free from this. But the world by wisdom knew not God, and Christ crucified is the wisdom of God. The apostle says, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." A crucified Christ, and a message of salvation to every one that believeth on Him, are counted by the wise Gentiles to be "foolishness"; and yet that cross shows man to be so ignorant that he did not know God, and so bad that he hated Him without a cause: Moreover, in the death of Christ not only were sins judged, but our old man was crucified with Him, which shows that man has now no place in the flesh before God, either as to righteousness or wisdom, but that He has given us a new life and standing in Christ Jesus, "who of God is made unto us wisdom." The cross put an end to man's boasted wisdom; this is why Paul would know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Next he touches their consciences about a flagrant sin and how does he meet it? By ministering Christ. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." At the passover all leaven was to be put out of their houses; therefore this manifest uncleanness -- leaven -- must be purged out of their midst. Again, when gathered together in {unto} the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is in the midst, and where the Holy Spirit is the power, how could such wickedness be associated with the name? And further, how can you eat and have fellowship with one who has so openly dishonored the Lord who is holy? Therefore do not eat with such, "put away from among yourselves that wicked person." They were to put away not only from the Lord's table, so from among themselves, and were with such not even to eat (1 Cor. 5). The sin of fornication is further met in two ways:

1st Being joined to the Lord, one spirit, and our bodies being the members of Christ, shall we "take the members of Christ, and make the members of an harlot"?

2nd Being bought with a price, we are not our own, but are to glorify God in bodies, especially remembering that our "body is the temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 4:15-20).

Why should not a Christian be a bondman of men? Because he is the Lord's freeman; he has been bought with a price, and is Christ's bondman (1 Cor. 7:22, 23). And as to not partaking at an idol's temple, not having union there, not partaking of the table of demons, shows that the communion God has graciously brought us into is the communion at the Lord's table of those who have a common ground of fellowship in the blood of Christ, and a common expression of it as members of one body in breaking and eating the same loaf. Thus being identified with Christ in His death, we are necessarily

separated from every false fellowship, and every table not the Lord's (1 Cor. 10).

In the next chapter, where we find that the Lord's Supper had been mixed up with such carnality as to have lost its proper character among them, he brings in the Lord again to set all right. He shows that they had missed the Lord in it -- had not discerned the Lord's body. He instructs them that it is the time for remembering the Lord, and showing the Lord's death till He come, who said, "Do this in remembrance of me." He shows them that here the Lord was everything; that the supper was in respect of the body and blood of the Lord, and that the chastening of the Lord had come in because they had not discerned the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11).

As to the doctrine which denied the resurrection of the body, the apostle at once brings in the Lord. He says, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen . . . and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished," etc. He asserts the fact that "He rose again the third day," that He did so "according to the Scriptures," and that His resurrection had been verified by the most ample, and competent, and incontrovertible testimony. He teaches that "Christ" has risen as "the first-fruits," and the next in order to rise are "they that are Christ's at His coming." He concludes by showing that Christ in His abounding grace has thus triumphed over death and the grave for us; so that we are now entitled to say, "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" How manifold, then, are the ways in which Christ is ministered to us in the word of God, and how dear it is that the ministry of the Holy Ghost is that which ministers Christ to souls!

In the Lord's epistles to the seven churches, the various aspects in which He presents Himself to each assembly, according to its need and condition, is most striking. We would only now direct attention to one point. Looking at the seven epistles as giving the phases of the Church's course on earth in that of corporate responsibility to the Lord, and considering that the last four have reference to the Lord's coming, and will go on together to the end, as Popery, Protestantism, Philadelphianism, and Laodiceanism, it interesting to observe how the Lord presents Himself to them; for it is clear, if this be the fourfold state of Christendom to the end, that these presentations of them must be the last kinds of His ministry till He come. And, briefly, what are they? His Person "the Son of God." The Giver of the Holy Ghost, and source of gift, -- "He that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars." The holiness and truth suited to those gathered together in His name" The Holy and the True. And the truth of the new creation -- "the beginning of the creation of God." It becomes then a serious question whether, from the ministry that has gone forth in these last days, it is not Christ presenting Himself to Christendom in His last aspects? If so, how soon His word may be fulfilled: "Behold, I come quickly!"

It would be highly interesting to trace in other epistles the various ways in which the Lord Jesus Christ was presented to the saints, did our limits admit of it. We trust, however, that enough has been added to show that ministering Christ

according to God will carry with it the authority of Scripture -- "preach the Word," and therefore present Him to souls of whom the Scripture testifies; it will thus have a positive and definite character -- "we preach Christ Jesus the Lord." Surely the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Ghost alone can direct the servant of the Lord as to the kind of pasture the sheep and lambs of Christ need, and the power of the Holy Ghost alone

can carry it home to the heart. How otherwise can the flock of God be fed? How can any one be fitted for this holy yet happy service, unless he is living in the enjoyment of the Lord and His truth in his own soul? Unless he is waiting on the Lord, how will he be able to give his household meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing.

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Our Altar

We have an altar (Heb. 13:10).

In olden time an altar was the usual way of approach to God. It might be simply connected with calling on the name of the Lord, as we find in Abraham; or it might be for offering sacrifices, as was done by Noah and others.

The altar had a central place among the children of Israel; for whole burnt-offerings, meat-offerings, peace-offerings, and sin-offerings were there presented to God. Blood too was put upon the horns of the altar, sprinkled upon it, round about it, and poured out at the bottom of the altar. The altar of burnt-offering was thus a connecting-link between the people and Jehovah; that which was done in service with it, while it was blessedly typical and instructive to us, was of a kind suited to a people who were outside the veil -- a people in the flesh, with an earthly calling and hope, and outside the holiest of all, the place of God's presence.

The people were so identified with the altar that certain parts of some of the offerings thus presented to God were to be eaten. Hence we read, "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" (1 Cor. 10:18). This was their altar, and their jealousy was properly stirred if anything seemed to interfere with THE ALTAR for all Israel; for they knew that by it they were remarkably connected with Jehovah. When on one occasion the other tribes heard that the Reubenites had built an altar on the borders of Jordan -- "a great altar to see to" -- they were greatly alarmed, and severely censured them, because it appeared to be divisive of the one nation, and to rival the one altar which was for all the people who formed the one family of Israel; and they were only satisfied by the Reubenites assuring them that they had not built an altar by Jordan for offering sacrifices thereon, but for a witness. They said,

God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn this day from following the Lord, to build an altar for burnt-offerings, for meat-offerings, or for sacrifices, *beside the altar of the Lord our God* that is before His tabernacle (Josh. 22:29).

It is clear then that Israel had an altar, and that altar was the altar of Jehovah their God, with whom they were in covenant relationship.

We see also in the days of Ezra the prominent place which

was given to the altar when the children of Israel returned from their captivity. It was the first thing they set up, as if they could not approach God, or be connected with Him, on any other ground. We are told they

built THE ALTAR of the Lord God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set THE ALTAR upon his bases . . . and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto Jehovah (Ezra 3:2, 3).

But Israel's altar was associated with many and oft-repeated offerings which could never "take away sins." There was, therefore, the bringing of sins continually to remembrance, without giving remission, so that the conscience was not purged. The worshipers too, even Aaron's sons, the priests, could not draw near, could not enter into the holiest of all, because the veil was up, to show that no one even of those who were connected with the altar and partakers of the sacrifices could enter into God's presence. They were thus at a distance from God. These sons of Aaron, with all their privileges, notwithstanding the exalted office they held, the garments for glory and for beauty divinely given them, and all the grandeur of the ritual system in which they occupied so important a position, could not with all have a purged conscience, or have access into the place of God's presence. The high priest only, and that not without blood and incense, could go there and live, and that only once in a whole year. This ritual system of altar, sacrifices, and priests, with its worldly sanctuary, though of divine origin, was of an earthly order, and shadowed good things to come. The many and oft-repeated sacrifices could not give a perfect conscience, because they could not take away sins. The veil standing, and an order of priesthood between God and the people, showed, as well as their altar with many and oft-repeated sacrifices, that the people were at a distance from God, and had not "access with confidence."

But we Christians have an altar, and our altar is very different from Israel's. Those who are outside the veil have no authority to eat at the altar we have. It is impossible that it should be so; for it is for those who know that the veil has been rent from the top to the bottom, and that the Forerunner has for us entered, after having appeared here to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, so that now we have liberty by faith to be

inside the veil in the very presence of God, without a fear, by the blood of Jesus, and that for communion and worship. "We have an altar, whereof. they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." Our altar then is inside the veil; it is our way of approach to God. As the blood upon the mercy-seat typically set forth that sins had been judged, that all the propitiatory value of the sacrifice was always before God, as well as the merits of Christ in the perfume of the sweet incense, so He both invites and welcomes us there where He is, who entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Our altar then is not seen, but blessedly known to faith. It is connected only with one sacrifice, which was offered once for all, and because of its everlasting value need never to be repeated. Its eternal efficacy is ever before God; by it the believer's conscience is purged, so that he can be in God's presence as a purged worshiper. Wondrous privilege! By this one offering he is sanctified or set apart for God, and "perfected for ever." The infinite value of this one sacrifice for sins is also known by the fact that the One who offered it is sitting down in perpetuity on the right hand of God. "There remaineth therefore no more sacrifice for sins."

The presence of the Savior now in the glory of God, who was once the Sin-bearer on the cross, plainly proves that our sins have been taken away for ever. God, whose holiness demanded that the Sin-bearer should be forsaken, and who unsparingly poured out upon Him the judgment due for our sins, not only raised Him from among the dead for our justification, but have Him the highest place in glory at His own right hand as alone adequate for what He had done as having glorified God in the earth, and having finished the work which He gave Him to do. The rending of the veil was also God's way of showing us His perfect satisfaction with the work of atonement, and that distance between Himself and the believer had been judicially removed, and for ever.

Our altar then is founded on the precious fact that our sins have been judged, and that we have a purged conscience; for God hath said, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." We draw near, therefore in the consciousness of this, and the presence of Him there, who went into heaven itself by His own blood, is our unquestionable title to be there, so that we enter in with "boldness."

Do we enjoy this blessed way of approach to God? Have we known what it is thus to "draw near," being assured of God's welcoming us on the ground of the precious blood of His own Son? If so, what can be our employ when there but praise and thanksgiving? In the consciousness of the eternal efficacy of the blood of Jesus, how can we hesitate to take our place inside the veil as purged worshipers who have "no more conscience of sins"? Consciousness of sit in us -- a sinful nature -- we shall have; and it may be the sorrowful consciousness of having sinned as God's children, and calling us to self judgment and confession in answer to the advocacy of Christ Jesus with the Father, before forgiveness is realized and our communion restored. But we are told that "the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins"; that is, the believer's conscience has been purged by the blood of Christ, and he is perfected for ever by that one

offering, though he may yet fail, and sin, and be greatly distressed on account of it; but he can never be a sinner in his sins again under the burden, and guilt, and condemnation which his conscience once knew. Being perfected forever by that one offering, and having God's assurance in His own word that He will no more remember his sins and iniquities, he can happily take his place before God inside the veil as knowing forgiveness of sins, having a purged conscience, and being a purged worshiper. How rich and marvelous is this blessedness! How could a Jew, however godly, know such happy nearness to God? Is it any wonder then that it is said that "we have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle"? The word of the Spirit therefore to us is, "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually."

But if our approach now is so near to God that we are able to come by faith where Jesus is as purged worshipers, what must be our place necessarily on earth? If we have now access with confidence where Christ is, surely no other place can suit us on earth but what suits Him. He certainly finds a spot on earth where He can be, and where He is; and where is that? Is it everywhere? The Lord Jesus being a divine Person, He cannot but be in every place beholding the evil and the good; but He graciously gives His own presence, and takes His place in the midst of two or three who are gathered together in His name. There may be in Christendom a loud profession of Christianity, largely organized systems to which the Savior's name is attached to give them credit; they may bear the stamp of antiquity, boast of hereditary and successional claims, and, like the Jews, speak of some things among them having had a divine origin, be zealous also in observing ordinances, and yet be so far from subjection to the Lord Jesus, and so indifferent as to care for the truth of God as to become a "camp," which the faithful are enjoined to leave. On earth, as in heaven, the Holy Spirit presents to us CHRIST, not men; CHRIST, not tradition, as the central Object of gathering. (Matt. 18:20) As to our place on earth, we have, amidst all the confusion, to find out the spot where the Lord Jesus Christ is in the midst, around whom are those who "call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Tim. 2:22).

Having found our true place at our "altar" inside the veil, it is *then* said,

Let us go forth therefore *unto Him without the camp*, bearing His reproach {Heb. 13:13}.

Observe here the question is not one of separation from the world, right as that is, but it is to go "outside the camp" of religiousness to the Lord Jesus in this time of His rejection, and suffer the reproach that may be connected with this faithful step. It is remarkable that the inspired writer quotes the sin-offering on the day of atonement for instruction as to this; for the blood of some of their sacrifices was carried *inside the veil* to the presence of God, and put upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat; and afterwards the body was burned *outside the camp*; and the reference to Jesus having died without the gate of the city as the antitype makes it clear that "the camp" was in those days the religious system of the Jews who had rejected Christ. The temple was then standing, and as

there was a disposition in the Hebrew Christians to go back to Judaism, the inspired writer shows them that the path of faith is *outside* it all *with Christ*, bearing His reproach. No doubt Christendom has taken the place of Judaism, by reducing the heavenly principles of the Church of God to an earthly, successional, and established religion on earth, and setting up again an earthly order of priesthood to accredit it, and also to give it a visible and permanent footing in the world which knew not Christ. The true believer, however, may say that "*Here*" (not only as to the world, but as to any established religiousness in it) "we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come"; and knows that the Lord is coming quickly.

It is important also to perceive in this epistle that there is no exhortation to go to Christ outside the camp until believers are brought as purged worshipers inside the veil. No doubt the order is divine. We cannot learn our true place on earth, but by first taking possession of our true place in the heavenlies where the Lord Jesus is. The blood was first carried into the holy place before the victim was burnt without the camp. First, it is said, "Let it draw near by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His

flesh"; and after this it is said, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Heb. 10:20-22; 13:13) Then walk follows.

But the Israelite had frequently to offer sacrifices; and have we no sacrifices to offer? Yes, indeed we have, and that "continually," as we have before observed. But what are they? They are "spiritual sacrifices" of praise and thanksgiving, and they are temporal sacrifices to those who need. But although our approach is so very near, and our blessings heavenly and eternal, all founded on the atoning death of Christ, and all secured for us by Him who is gone into heaven itself by His own blood, and now appears before the face of God for us, we are again reminded that it is "by Him" that our sacrifices are acceptable to God -- "By Him therefore let it offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with *such sacrifices God is well pleased*."

The Christian Friend, 1885, pp. 297-305.

Our Lord's Loving Request

This do in remembrance of me (1 Cor. 11:24, 25).

We do not go to the gospels for our instruction and authority as to the Lord's supper; for about this He has since then spoken to us from heaven, as was revealed to the Church by the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 11:23). True it is that in the gospels we find, after keeping the passover, that our Lord took bread, gave thanks, brake, and gave to His disciples, saying, "Take eat, this is my body," etc.; and so far we may speak of it as the Lord's institution of His supper. But though it is more or less spoken of by all the four evangelists, it is only Luke who records our Lord's special request --

This do in remembrance of me,

and he names it only once. Moreover, in the gospels the hope connected with it, as set forth by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, was the kingdom --

I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom;

for the Lord was then looking to the restoration and blessing of the nation of Israel, ere He will know joy in the world, and then His people will share it with Him. When He was drawing nigh to the cross of Calvary, He said to His disciples, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me"; and truly it is the case that since He was taken down from the cross no worldling's eye has rested upon Him. His mission to the earth then closed; and joy on earth, in which He will participate, can only be when He takes to Himself His great power, and establishes the long-looked-for kingdom on earth in righteousness.

With Christ rejected by the world, and hated without a cause by His own nation, but raised by God from among the

dead, and glorified as Man on His own right hand, an entirely new order begins. The world being now under sentence of judgment, the Jews dispersed in governmental displeasure because of their sin, the kingdom so often spoken of by prophets is in abeyance until He shall come, whose right it is. Meanwhile the Holy Ghost is received and shed forth by the exalted Savior, the veil having been rent from the top to the bottom; and the Forerunner having gone into heaven itself by His own blood, the Father's love, counsels, and ways are having their accomplishment in calling out a body and bride for the Son; while we are taught to look for His coming again, at any time, to take us bodily and forever out of this scene to the Father's house, and so be forever with the Lord.

It is not difficult then to see why, when Israel for a time is governmentally given up, and a new order of blessing begun in connection with the Son of man being in the glory of God, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, instead of looking forward to the "kingdom," we are taught by the Lord from heaven to keep His supper "till He come."

As those who know we have redemption in Christ, and by His precious blood, it is surely the delight of our hearts to do what is pleasing in His sight, who said, "This do in remembrance of me"; and observe that in this loving request we have something to do, as well as someone to remember. It is also the expression of one body. "This do" implies an act to be carried out with others. We may have sweet remembrances of the Savior's precious words and ways and suffering unto death for us when alone; but here it is something to be done. Our Lord took bread, gave thanks, brake, and gave them

saying,

Take, eat.

This do in remembrance of me.

After the same manner also He took the cup, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.

It is not true then that I can remember the Lord at home, when alone, in the same way as when gathered with others to His name to carry out His mind, in thus eating of the bread and drinking of the cup. There is, in carrying out this special request of our Lord, something to be done "This do"; so that if I do not do it, I do not carry out His mind.

Then there is a Person to be remembered; not what He has done, blessed as it is always to think of it, but Himself. We are to remember Him; not, as is often said, that we come together to remember His death, but to remember Him. And surely the difference is great in its effect on our souls, whether we are thinking of a work done for us, or of the loving One who did it. No doubt when we are occupied with Him in eating the bread and drinking the cup, we cannot forget His death and the love that brought Him there for us -- that love which many waters could not quench, nor all the power of man or Satan hinder. But while in doing this we remember Him, we also announce or show forth His death. This should be our employ "till He come."

As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come (1 Cor. 11:26).

How soon He may come for us!

In our doing this, there is not only the discerning of the Lord's body, but the expression of the "one body" in our breaking and eating of the same loaf. We have our individual thoughts and exercises of faith and love in thus remembering Him; but here believers are gathered together, and because we are "many" we are collectively the expression of being one body in Christ. "For we being many are one bread (or loaf): for we are all partakers of that one loaf" (1 Cor. 10:17). It is important to see this as characterizing the Lord's table, as we are so instructed by the apostle who was specially called to minister to the Church (Col. 1:25). We have no such thoughts in the account given in the gospels of the institution of the supper, because Israel had not then been formally given up, nor had the mystery of the Church been revealed; but when the assembly was revealed to Paul, and made known to others by the Spirit, then the fitting time came for teaching those who were members of the body of Christ, that in the act of doing this, in remembrance of the Lord, there is the expression of our being one with all other believers -- "one body." Let us not fail to notice also that in the evangelist's account of the Lord's supper only apostles -- men, and not women -- partook of it; but when the Church is set up on earth, then all believers are addressed as to their great privilege in thus remembering the Lord till He come. May we know more of the Lord's mind as to this, and of our accountability to Him who is in the midst of those gathered together in His name.

The Christian Friend, 1885, pp. 134-137.

Remarks on the Difference Between Holding the Truth of “One Body” and Keeping “the Spirit’s Unity”

Every child of God, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, is a member of the “one body,” which is formed by “one Spirit.” The body cannot be broken or divided, for it is formed by divine power; but the manifestation of body and one Spirit has utterly failed, hence the present confusion in Christendom.

We are enjoined to practically act out the membership of “one body,” and the activity of “one Spirit” leads to it; but we are never told to keep the unity of the body, but “the unity of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is the *power* for everything that is according to God; and He orders through the Word everything as private walk, and as to our collective action on assembly ground.

If the Lord speaks to His assemblies, He bids us “hear what the Spirit saith”; and as there is *one* Spirit, dwells in the assembly on earth, He bids every individual to hear what the Spirit saith to every assembly. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the assemblies” (Rev. 2, 3). The Lord therefore calls on every member of the “one body” to hear what He saith about every assembly. If every member of the “one body” heard therefore what the Spirit saith unto the assemblies, and acted on it, the unity would be kept. But all members of the “one body” do not hear, and, it may be, do not care to hear what the Spirit saith. Is it not clear then that those who do hear *must act* in faithfulness to the Lord, however sorrowfully, separate from those who do not hear what the Spirit saith? For we are commanded at all costs to *keep the Spirit’s unity* in the bond of peace. How else could it be fully kept?

An evil might break out in some part of the world among those who, in these last days, are gathered on the ground of God’s assembly of a character hitherto unknown. What should the faithful do? It (the evil) may be in a place a thousand miles off, or more; but can we be indifferent to it? Impossible, if we believe in “one Spirit” dwelling in the Church or assembly. Would not such at once make the Lord their refuge, and turn to “the word of His grace”? Does not the Spirit lead true hearts in this way? Well, the Lord saith, “Hear what the Spirit saith.” And such would soon find that the Spirit exposes and rebukes it as unholy, as contrary to the truth, and unsuited to Him who is the Holy and the True. Those who look only to men must go wrong; those only can have the Lord’s mind who wait on Him and honor the Holy Ghost.

And, further:

1. The Spirit’s unity must be according to holiness or separation, from evil; for He is a HOLY Spirit.
2. It must be according to the truth (and we know who said, “Thy word is truth”); for *the Spirit is truth*, and He guides into *all the truth*.
3. The path of the Spirit must certainly have in view the honor and glory of “the Son”; for Jesus said, “He shall glorify me.” Happy are those who look above men’s

heads, and amid, it may be, much failure “hear what the Spirit saith.”

4. Those who oppose the action of the “one Spirit” in any measure, or for any reason, seriously dishonor the Lord, grieve the Holy Spirit whereby they are sealed, damage their own souls, perhaps mislead others, mar the testimony of God, and fall under His rebuke.

May all who read these lines look unto Him who is able to keep us from falling; and may our cry be, “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

The Christian Friend, 1885, pp. 138-140.

Remarks on the Twenty-Second Psalm

It is not without importance that this psalm is headed “A psalm of David,” because it shows that the writer was moved by the Holy Spirit to give many details concerning the crucifixion, sufferings, and death of the Savior at Calvary about a thousand years before they had their actual fulfilment. Elsewhere David is spoken of as “a prophet,” and our Lord Himself referred to him as having written another psalm “by the Holy Ghost.” Without controversy then, it was the Holy Ghost by David who drew this prophetic picture of the sufferings of Christ as the Sin-bearer on the cross (Acts 2:30; Mark 12:36; 2 Peter 1:21).

This psalm also gives us a striking example of the ministry of “the prophets,” who by the Spirit of Christ testified beforehand “the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” Thus they looked over the present Church-time entirely. The Church was not revealed in the Old Testament, though there were many allusions to the blessing of God going out to the Gentiles. The Church or Assembly was a mystery. It was “hid in God,” “not made known,” “kept secret since the world began,” till Saul of Tarsus was converted by *seeing* the Lord in heaven, and hearing Him speak of the saints on earth as one with Himself -- “Why persecutest thou Me?” Whatever figures or types of the Church -- the body and bride of Christ -- we may now be able to trace in Old Testament Scriptures, it is clear that the testimony of the Holy Spirit in old time was largely concerning Jews and Gentiles; while in the New Testament we have divine instruction concerning Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God.

The first words in this psalm could not have been uttered by any one but Christ Jesus the Savior. Nor will they ever be repeated, because His work accomplished on the cross has eternal efficacy. His sacrifice was offered once for all. He could say, “It is finished.” The redemption He accomplished was eternal. Observe, the One so forsaken was at that moment declaring His perfect confidence in God and relationship to Him -- “My God!” and yet He added the bitter cry, “Why hast Thou forsaken Me?” No saint in glory will ever say, “Why hast Thou forsaken me?” but will be presenting everlasting thanksgiving unto God and the Lamb; nor will the wicked, who are banished from God’s presence into outer darkness, be able to say, “My God,” while realizing the bitterness of deserved banishment from His holy presence for ever. It is clear then that this bitterest of all sorrows was known to Jesus as the Sin-bearer on the cross, and He only would, or could, drink the bitter cup. As then our adorable Lord did the perfect will of Him who sent Him, and by His one offering perfected for ever them that are sanctified, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, and this dolorous cry will never be heard again throughout God’s vast universe.

These very words, we find in the gospels, were actually uttered by our Lord in the closing moments of His sorrow and agony on the cross, when His soul was made an offering for sin. Let us often recall to our minds this scene of unmingled distress, and lay to heart its most solemn import. The blood of the cross not only made peace, but it is able to temper all our joys and give sweetness to all our sorrows.

We cannot grasp the magnitude of the finished work of Christ, because of its infinite character and eternal efficacy. We may, however, have some feeble estimate of its greatness if we consider

- (1) the glory of the Person who did it;
- (2) the depth of suffering, and death under the judgment of God for sins, it necessitated;
- (3) the marvelous results.

1. No one but a divine Person, none less than one having the attributes of Deity, and yet perfect man, was able to accomplish it. Man had sinned, and man must bear the penalty. “By man came death, by Man came also the resurrection from among the dead.” He truly said, “I came down from heaven”; and yet while here could also speak of Himself as “the Son of man which is in heaven,” “Before Abraham was I am”; and His perfect manhood, and the attributes of Deity, are plainly shown in His life and walk. As perfect Man He ate and drank, looked for comforters, wept with the bereaved, endured hunger and thirst, was weary with His journey, and had all the qualities of man, sin apart. No less a Person could bear the penalty due to our sins, or answer the righteous demands of the Majesty on high; no one else could so honor, obey, and vindicate God as to His ways with man, and glorify Him as to bearing our sins, so as to blot them out for ever from His holy eye; and also merit, at the hands of divine righteousness, to be set on the right hand of God, and crowned with glory and honor.

2. The depth of suffering the work of the cross involved is seen in the fact that the anticipation of it caused the holy Sufferer to sweat “as it were great drops of blood falling clown to the ground.” May we ponder this solemn moment, and the love which many waters could not quench! Christ knew all that should come upon Him. The grief and suffering, infinitely beyond all else, was to be forsaken by God, when He was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sins of many. Though dark and sorrowful beyond all thought as it was, yet He could discern at the end light and glory and rest; for we are told that “for the joy that was set before Him” He “endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

3. The results also show the vastness of the work accomplished when God’s own Son poured out His soul unto death. As to the *Assembly*, the Church, we are told that “Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. 5). With regard to *Israel* it was prophesied “that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (John 11:50). As to *creation*, we are assured that “the creature [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God” (Rom. 8:21). Moreover, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth (the infernal regions), every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:8-11). Nor is this all; for it shall finally be manifest that our Lord Jesus has abolished death, and judged him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; taken away the sin of the world, and so

established righteousness, that there will be forever a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

In this psalm it is plainly seen that Christ suffered on the cross from man, from Satan, and from God.

1. *By man* He was hated without a cause; for His love they were His adversaries. Betrayed, denied, forsaken by all, bound, led to Annas, then to Caiaphas, and after that to the judgment-hall, He was condemned by Pilate, who believed Him to be without fault, scourged, mocked, spit upon, compelled to bear His cross, nailed to the tree, degraded to be numbered with the transgressors, was taken by wicked hands, crucified, and slain.

2. *Satan* no doubt was behind the wicked activity of man, aiding him by his power; for it had been said in the garden, four thousand years before, that the serpent -- the devil -- should bruise the heel of the woman's Seed. But more than this, Satan had "the power of death," and doubtless brought the terrors of death, and the dreadful bitterness of the cup, so before the holy Sufferer, that He desired if it were possible that the cup might pass from Him, but in His perfection could only ask it in subjection to the Father's will; therefore He added, "Nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

3. But though the perfect Sufferer discerned the power of man and Satan, yet He took the cup directly from the hand of God, so that He said on the same night in which He was betrayed, when almost under the shadow of the cross, "The cup which my Father hath Given me, shall I not drink it?" And when hanging on the tree in unutterable pain and anguish, He took all from God. He could say -- "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death." This surely was His perfection. Perfect in faith, and love, and devotedness to the will of Him that sent Him, yet was He most sensitive to the hatred and insult which men so cruelly heaped upon Him. We hear Him speaking of being "despised of the people," whose violence and malignity He could only liken to "strong bulls of Bashan," as "a ravening and a roaring lion" gaping upon Him, or to "dogs" encompassing Him. Nor was He insensible to their "scorn," the shaking of the head, and derision in saying, "He trusted on Jehovah that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him." Keenly did He feel their cruelty when He added, "The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet." All this wickedness of man was no doubt strengthened by "the prince of this world." But He told out to God what men said and did, and added, "Thou art He that took me out of the womb: Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb Thou art my God from my mother's belly. Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help." (Psa. 22:9-11). We learn from the gospels that the whole weight of the body of the holy Sufferer was suspended on the nails in His hands and His feet from the third to the ninth hour, that darkness covered the whole land for the last three hours, and it was not till then that the bitter cry came forth, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Before this He was always heard, so that He said, "I knew that Thou hearest Me always; "but now it was, "Why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My roaring? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." Even in Gethsemane His prayer was to "Abba, Father," so that His perfect communion with the Father was manifest; an angel, too, was sent to strengthen Him. But on the cross His prayer is not heard; He receives no help, He is alone, cry in., to His God, and

not heard, but "forsaken"; for there He was suffering for our sins, and there "God . . . condemned sin in the flesh."

Why is He thus abandoned by God? Why is the One who loved, obeyed, and honored God supremely, forsaken in the hour of deepest need? Why did God turn away from the only Man in the universe in whom He always found unchanging delight? There is but one answer, and the Lord gives it Himself; it is this: "Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Sin must be judged. The death of the cross was not merely a question of His obedience unto death, but God's righteous judgment of "sin in the flesh," and of blotting out our sins for ever. God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. What unutterable grace! What a deliverance! Blessed be His name, He appeared once at the consummation of the ages "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9:26). This necessitated God's forsaking of Christ, God's condemnation of sin. This is why in deepest agony He cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

And even then all was perfect. Faith was perfect, and *confidence* too; for it was still, "My God." *Love* was perfect; for He fully carried out the Father's will. *Obedience* was perfect; for it was the Father's commandment. *Self-surrender* was perfect; for He claimed nothing for Himself. *Holiness* was perfect; for nothing impure was there, not even a spot or blemish. *Hope* was perfect; for He could say, "Thou wilt not leave My *soul* in hell [hades]; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One [this body] to see corruption. Thou wilt shew Me the path of life [resurrection]: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand [ascension] there are pleasures for evermore" (Psa. 16). All in the death of the cross was perfect; and while all the claims of righteousness, truth, and holiness, were perfectly met, yet how sweetly did the *grace* of the suffering One shine forth when He prayed for His enemies, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." And again, to the expiring thief, in reply to his dying cry for mercy, He said, "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Hence the witness of the Spirit concerning this atoning work is: "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," and "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:14, 17). Blessed testimony to the eternal efficacy of that finished work!

In the death of the cross Jesus reached the point morally where He could say, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." There, at such a cost, He obeyed, honored, and vindicated God in all His ways with man. The moral glory of the death of the cross was perfect. Faith was perfect, not only when He clave to God in truest love and obedience when men and Satan were against Him, but when God forsook Him. As we have seen it was still, "My God."

He was heard, we are told, even from "the horns of the unicorns." God, who alone could estimate the glory and perfection of the death of the cross, in righteousness raised Him up from among the dead. Then the first thing we hear, after this account of the sufferings of Christ, in reference to the glories which should follow, is, "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren"; and we have only to turn to Gospel by John to see how exactly it was fulfilled. Revealing Himself to Mary as the risen One, but not, yet ascended, He said unto her, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God" (John 20:17). This she "told the disciples." It was the first time that our Lord spoke of their relationship to Him of

“brethren,” and of their relationship to the Father of “children” -- “My Father and your Father.” Precious fruit of the death of the cross!

Next, the seed of Jacob, and all who fear Jehovah, are called to praise Him. Then the Savior praises Jehovah in the great

congregation, when He will reign before His ancients gloriously. Then “all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto Jehovah: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Thee. For the kingdom is Jehovah’s: and He is the Governor among the nations.”

Spiritual Slothfulness

Knowledge is not *faith*, and *principles* are not *power*. It is a mistake to think the one or the other, however much the Holy Spirit may use the knowledge of the word and principles of truth for our guidance and blessing. The Laodicean element, alas! so rife on every hand, is what we have most to dread, and most resolutely to overcome; and what is Laodiceanism but men priding themselves on holding orthodox principles with practical indifference to the honor and claims of our Lord Jesus Christ? Many of God’s children are suffering in their souls from lack of spiritual acquaintance with God’s mind as revealed in the Scriptures of eternal truth; but this is not the root of the palsied state of a large number of those who profess to be God’s saints. God be praised for those who know, on the infallible authority of His word, brought home to their hearts by His Spirit, that they “are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus,” and abound with praise and thanksgiving because of it.

When reading carefully the epistles, we are struck with the fact that the first thing which attracted the eye of an inspired apostle, when considering the state of the saints in any place, was not the amount of *knowledge* they possessed, but what their condition was as to “faith,” and “love,” and “hope”; and, after thus considering their state, he *then* sought to correct and instruct them as to principles and knowledge of the truth. Look, for instance, at the first epistle to the Thessalonians. He says, “We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of *faith*, and labor of *love*, and patience of *hope* in our Lord Jesus Christ,” etc. And in the second epistle to the same assembly he wrote first of all, “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity [love] of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (1 Thess. 1:2, 3; 2 Thess. 1:3). *Then* in each epistle instruction as to the *knowledge* of God’s truth followed. In Ephesians he says, “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your *faith* in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you,” and then prays that the Father of glory may give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the *knowledge* of Him . . . that they might know what is the *hope* of His calling, etc. (Eph. 1:15-23). What a serious mistake then such make who place “knowledge” on the foremost ground instead of faith, and love, and hope!

Again, if we turn to the epistle to the saints at Colosse, the same inspired apostle says, “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your *faith* in Christ Jesus, and of the *love* which ye have to all the saints, for the *hope* which is laid up for you in heaven,” etc. He then prays they “may be filled with the *knowledge* of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding”; he has also great

conflict, or agony, lest they should come short of the apprehension of the mystery of God, and he sets before them great principles of truth as to their being in Christ Jesus, with the view of delivering them from the philosophy and traditions which threatened to undermine their faith. He clearly showed them that, as being in Christ Jesus, filled full in Him, and holding fast Christ the Head of the body, they would be delivered from rationalism on the one hand and from ritualism on the other, and walk worthy of the Lord.

Our present object, however, is not to trace this further in the apostolic writings, important as it is, but to enquire whether the Laodicean state, so nauseous to our Lord, is not being rapidly brought about by spiritual slothfulness; and whether it does not call for great searchings of heart, as to how far any of us may be helping on this closing phase of the apostate church. For it is clear, that, in the apostolic epistles, we are enjoined to be “diligent,” and warned against being “slothful.” We are taught to give “all diligence” to *add to our faith* virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly love, and love; and in this way we should be neither idle, nor unfruitful, as regards the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But where this diligence is lacking, such are blind, short-sighted, and have forgotten they were purged from their old sins. We are also exhorted to be not “slothful,” but to shew the same “diligence” to the full assurance of hope unto the end; as if the enjoyment of our “hope” were connected with diligence in the service and ways of the Lord (2 Pet. 1:5-11; Heb. 6:11, 12). Happy those who are diligently exercised before the Lord, as to their growth in faith, and love, and hope (Rom. 15:13).

Perhaps one of the earliest outward marks of inward decline in a Christian is the readiness to excuse oneself from devotedness and diligence in the Lord’s service. Difficulties are spoken of not heard of before, and dangers too are feared; so that the manifest neglect is both accounted for and excused, when such “will not plow by reason of the cold,” and say, “There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets” (Prov. 26:13; 20:4). The human mind can easily imagine or invent obstacles to unselfish and God-honoring service, and when this is yielded to, instead of abiding in the truth at all costs, a place of ease is readily found. When we lose the authority of the Word on our conscience, that “it is given unto us, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake,” we can easily think of our present temporal advantage and personal ease in this passing scene, glide away from wisdom’s ways of pleasantness and peace, and become weak and helpless as to divine things. “The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth” (Prov. 25:15). Such have not only left their first love,

but turn away from those who stand for God's truth at all costs. A drowsy state has taken hold on them, so that their spiritual movements are little more than mechanical, "as the door turneth upon his hinges," and such become as indolent in caring for their souls' welfare, as a slumbering man who grieves at the trouble of bringing again his hand to his mouth (Prov. 19:24). He so slumbers that, while knowing all that is going on around him, he has no power to bestir himself. Yet, strange to say, with all this declension and indifference to the honor of the Lord, "the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason" (Prov. 26:16). What an appalling state! Such can only pride themselves on their desires, while their souls are dry and drowsy, so that the Scripture is fulfilled that "the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing"; and again, "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labor" (Prov. 13:4; 21:25).

Another mark of a *slothful* man is that he roasteth not that which he took in hunting (Prov. 12:27). He may associate with God's saints, hear the Word ministered with freshness and power, and may be even struck with its blessedness and suitability to himself; but when he retires, he is so absorbed with earthly things that he takes no further interest in it. Like the huntsman's prize, it is of no real benefit to him, because he is too indolent to occupy himself with it by meditating on the truth for his present profit. How strikingly this describes the state of many in this day. To read or to hear the Word is one thing, but to "meditate on it day and night" for our soul's profit is another thing. A clean animal, under the law, not only gathered up food, but it chewed the cud -- so that it was not only received but digested for renewal of strength and personal profit, and connected too with a walk suited to it (Lev. 11:3).

We are also told that "the way of a slothful man is as an hedge of thorns." A spiritual and earnest Christian finds something almost impenetrable in the endeavor to approach such. Greatly as those who care for their souls desire it, they find communion in the things of the Lord to be out of the question, and conclude that God only can break through the "hedge of thorns" (Prov. 15:19; 12:24). How truly, too, it is said, that "he also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster." We are familiar with it in earthly matters; but is it less true as to the things of the Lord, and our daily walk and testimony? Opportunities of honoring the Lord are missed, and never return, and the means entrusted to our stewardship are wrongly used; time is misspent, and health and strength wasted in the routine or amusements of this present evil age. "What is the harm of this or that?" saith the slothful man, little thinking that one who is practically alive unto God, and seeking His glory, would never ask such a question.

The truth is that, when we fail to enjoy the love of God to us in Christ, when Christ Himself is no longer the Object and Hope of our hearts, when meditation on the word of God becomes irksome, and closet prayer declines, when private praise and making melody in the heart to the Lord ceases, and we no longer overflow with love to our Savior God, to His ways, His people, and His service, we begin to be slothful Christians; and, oh, how serious is this state! for "slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger" (Prov. 19:15). Let it be noted that it is a *deep* sleep; alas! so deep, that ordinary means utterly fail to awake them. How humbling and depressing is this divinely-drawn picture of *sleep*, and yet how true! Can anything account for what

we see around us associated with the name of the Lord but slothfulness touching the things of God? And if so, how solemn and searching is the warning, admonishing us to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. The thought of some is, "I know I am saved," "I know I have eternal life," and the like; but do we consider, as we ought, that if the Spirit of God is grieved or quenched by our life and walk, we may lose the comfort and enjoyment of such precious truths, and even forget that we were purged from our old sins?

The Scriptures we have been looking at have mostly an *individual* application, so that it may be asked, What about *the assembly*, looking at it as God's corporate witness on earth during our Lord's absence? We need not say to many how terribly it has failed as such; so that instead of its being, as at first, the expression of the Spirit's unity, and of the unselfish love of Christ, "the Head" of the one body, division and false doctrine abound on every hand. Still the obligation of even two or three to be faithful as gathered to the Lord's name is as true as ever, and such are greatly encouraged by the Scriptures of truth (2 Tim. 2:20-22). As, therefore, God's assembly is made up of individuals, it is impossible to be right with God in a *corporate* sense unless we are so *individually*. An assembly gathered to the Lord's name will always manifest the moral qualities of those who comprise it individually. Here again Scripture reminds us that "by much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through" (Eccl. 10:18). Nothing is clearer than that, where there is earnestness in our Lord's service, and faithful walk by those who look for His coming, there is generally found comfort and blessing collectively. But where knowledge of Scripture is the first thing, with lack of earnest and united prayer, little spiritual care for Christ's members manifested, the Lord's coining as our only future dropped, there you will find, not only the absence of the increase of God, but where the life, and power, and union, once known, "decayeth," and the assembly discomfort is like a house which "droppeth through."

Again, we are admonished as to this by the wise man. He says, "I went by the field of the slothful . . . and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down." Here we see "thorns," the emblem of God's displeasure, instead of the "trees of His own planting"; "nettles" instead of fruitful branches; and "the stone wall" of separation, once so decided and solid, now "broken down," so that evil associations are easily found within; and evil intruders not excluded. All this is traced to spiritual indolence. "Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man" (Prov. 24:30-34).

But we may well look up and encourage our hearts in God, while we commend one another "to God, and to the word of His grace." His Fatherly love has not abated. The Lord is still with us, and all His resources are open to faith. So that we may exhort one another to be "steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Standing and State

Romans 1-8

We may look on the epistle to the Romans, speaking generally, as a divine treatise on "The Righteousness of God," for which we have abundant cause for praise and thanksgiving. It consists of four parts.

1. After considering the state of men before law, and the common ruin of Jews and Gentiles since the law and "all" are proved to "have sinned," to be "under sin," and "guilty before God" -- the question is, "How can God be just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly?" This is fully met by God justifying "freely," or without a cause, by His "*grace* through the *redemption* which is in Christ Jesus . . . to declare at this time *His righteousness*: that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:9, 19, 23-26). Thus, Christ having in sovereign grace died for the ungodly, and fully glorified God about our sins, God has not only in righteousness raised Him up from among the dead who was delivered for our offences, and given Him glory, but He is also just to Christ in counting us righteous for whom He died. In this way the "ungodly" who believe are "justified," they are reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and their faith is reckoned to them for righteousness.

This section of the epistle extends, as has often been noticed, to Rom. 5:11. In it we have the righteousness of God *manifested* without law, God imputing *righteousness without works*. The righteousness of God is *revealed* in the gospel, so that instead of God, as by law, demanding righteousness, His righteousness is declared, and is "upon all them that believe."

2. The next subject treated of in this marvelous epistle is how God can, consistently with His own righteousness, deliver us from the condemnation to which we were exposed as having an evil nature -- sin in the flesh -- which was enmity against God, not subject to His law, and connected us with the first man Adam. Here again we find we are delivered by *grace* through the death of Christ, on the principle of *divine righteousness*. "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, *God sending His own Son* in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" [a sacrifice for sin], "*condemned sin in the flesh*" (Rom. 8:3). Thus our *old man* has been crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled. We have died with Christ; we have died out of our Adam-standing, and have, by *grace*, a now life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This section extends from ch. 5:12 to the end of ch. 8. How truly it is said, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so *might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life* by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:20, 21).

3. Another subject is brought before us in Rom. 9, 10 and 11, which shows how God can justly reconcile His dealings and purposes concerning law-breaking, covenant-breaking Israel, and yet fulfil His promises to them as a people connected with David and Abraham. Though they utterly failed under a covenant of works, are at this moment under judicial blindness, and in other ways under Jehovah's governmental wrath because of their sins, yet divine *grace, through righteousness*, will yet be put forth for their blessing, through the redemption-work of *Him who died for*

that nation. "So *all Israel* shall be saved" (all the twelve tribes): "as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins" (Rom. 11:26, 27). This will be after "the great tribulation" (see Matt. 24:21) of Jehovah's righteous retribution for the rejection of their true Messiah. Thus wisdom, judgment, mercy, and truth will all be established in connection with the nation of Israel's future blessing. God will also be vindicated in all His ways, and righteousness and peace will kiss each other, One of their own prophets referring to this says: "The *work of righteousness* shall be peace, and the *effect of righteousness* quietness and assurance for ever." Again, "In *righteousness* shalt thou be established . . . and *their righteousness* is of me, saith the Lord" (Isa. 32:15-18; 54:14, 17). Now God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy upon all. But the word of the prophet must be fulfilled, that "*Zion shall be redeemed with judgment*." Well might an apostle exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His *judgments*, and His ways past finding out!"

4. The remainder of the epistle gives us for the most part instruction and exhortations as to the life and walk of those who are justified and in Christ Jesus, members of one body, and members one of another; and concludes with affectionate apostolic greetings. Even here, the first-mentioned of the moral ways of the kingdom of God is "righteousness" (Rom. 14:17).

We have then in this epistle three different aspects of God's ways of grace to men through righteousness. The first and second sections show His present goodness and blessing to us; first, as sinners, or *what we have done*; and secondly, as having a sinful nature, or *what we are*. The third section, as we have seen, refers to Israel; but in every case blessing is founded on the death of God's own Son, and flows out in grace and through righteousness.

In reference to the first part, where God is seen bringing such wondrous blessing to sinners -- men living in sins -- through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, the results stated are --

1. As to *standing*, the believer is brought into a new position; for instead of being an enemy, guilty, ungodly, and unrighteous, he is reconciled *to God*, and justified by God; the righteousness of God is upon him, and he is standing in the favor of God. Such is the standing here brought before us; and the believer enters into the enjoyment of it by faith. "By whom" (our Lord Jesus Christ) "also we have access by faith into this *grace* wherein *we stand*" (Rom. 5:2).

2. As to *state*. This also is new, and beyond anything we could have thought. When faith is in exercise on God's truth, he has "peace with God," "stands consciously in the favor of God," rejoices in hope of the glory of God, and by the gift of the Holy Ghost has the love of God shed abroad in his heart. Thus his thoughts, affections, enjoyment, and hope are bright, peaceful, and spiritual.

When we come to the second section a very different line of instruction meets us. It is not about what we have done, but about

what we where, as in Adam. For the former we needed *forgiveness*, for the latter *deliverance*. For “sins” we have remission, and righteousness is reckoned; but “sin in the flesh” -- an evil nature, -- cannot be forgiven; we can only be *delivered from it* by death, from under the judgment of God. But there is more here than mere deliverance in righteousness, there is the positive “gift” of a new nature “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” -- so that the delivered soul has two natures (Rom. 6:23; 7:25). And more still; for the Holy Spirit is here seen as livingly connecting us with Christ Jesus -- “the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus”; so that the believer who was in Adam in the flesh, is now “*not in the flesh, but in the Spirit*” -- “in Christ Jesus.” An experience and walk are necessarily associated with it.

1. As to *standing*, the believer is looked at in a very different character of standing from what we saw in Rom. 5, because of the *additional* blessings here made known. He is no less a justified person, an object of divine grace and reconciliation, standing in the favour of God, and having the Holy Ghost, than he was in ch. 5; but besides all these wondrous blessings, he is IN CHRIST JESUS, IN THE SPIRIT, and therefore NOT IN THE FLESH; though the flesh is still in him, and he is enjoined to mortify (not the body, but) the deeds of the body through the Spirit. *It is the fixed, unalterable standing of the believer in the One who is the other side of death and judgement, and alive for evermore.* “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” It is true we do not find the Spirit using the word “stand” here as in Rom. 5, but we have the fact so fully stated, that the believer is no longer looked at as in Adam, or described as in the flesh, but as *in Christ Jesus*. The believer’s position then is in Christ Jesus.

2. As to *state*, besides peace, joy, hope of glory, and God’s love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit as in cp. 5, we have freedom from the dominion of sin, deliverance from self, spiritual power, and a known relationship of children; we have a divine Leader, and a divine Helper in prayer; we know that God is for us, that all things work together for our good, and, though in present groaning and suffering, are looking for the redemption of the body. We are not only set where there is *no condemnation*, but are associated in life and love with Christ, from whom there is *no separation*. Such, more or less, is *the state* of the believer who knows deliverance through and in Christ Jesus.

It may be, however, that such spiritual power, liberty, and enjoyment will not be known unless the soul has in some measure learnt *experimentally* what he is, in his nature as a child of Adam, and on the authority of God’s word, sees that God has delivered him. We say in some measure; for the sense of these things is always being deepened in those who walk in the truth. When the soul knows that in his flesh dwells nothing good, that it is capable of everything bad, that putting it under law only brings out its opposition to God, and with all his desires for good he has no power over it, then, after continually struggling against it, he is forced to the conclusion that the only way it could be dealt with was by death and judgement. *Then*, recalling to mind the work of the cross and His resurrection, he can say, “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless *I live*, yet *not I*”; and he now finds that all his *resources* are in a triumphant and glorified Savior, also that the Holy Spirit is his *power* for all godliness.

It is not absolutely necessary that he should be in the truth of Rom. 5 before he knows his standing is in Rom. 8:1, thought it is

perhaps the usual course. It is possible that he may see at first from the truth of God that he is in Christ Jesus; and if so, he will not know the power of this deliverance till afterwards, when the *experience* of what he is in the flesh casts him upon the redemption and deliverance God hath wrought for him in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

We speak of being delivered *experimentally*, because it is it real emancipation from the principle of sin and death, from sin as a master, from our first Adam standing, and a conscious freedom and power to serve and honor the Lord. We are *set free* from the law of sin and death, notwithstanding it is still true that in us -- that is, in our flesh -- dwelleth no good thing; and, though having the first-fruits of the Spirit, we groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

It is well to bear in mind that deliverance may be accepted as a *doctrine* without deliverance being really known, except so far as informing the mind about it. We believe it is often the case. When this deliverance is known *experimentally*, such habitually take their new position as in Christ Jesus on approaching God, and “*walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*”

We must be careful, however, that we do not confound *experience* with *standing*. Paul was as much “a man in Christ” when buffeted on this earth by Satan as when he was in the third heaven. Nor should we confound *doctrine* with *experience*, though we generally accept doctrine before we have experience. There are, however, some who enjoy much liberty of soul (for they are so occupied with Christ that the Spirit is not grieved) who have but little knowledge of doctrine. They have great nearness to God by knowing Christ their righteousness. Intelligence is not faith. It is by faith we understand, and it is by faith we have peace and joy. Experience, however otherwise useful, never gives peace with God; for peace has been made. We are justified by faith, reconciled, and delivered through Jesus Christ. God is our Justifier, Reconciler, Deliverer, and Glorifier, and to Him be everlasting praise.

Rom. 8 is proper Christian experience. May the Lord give us to know it better! It is founded on redemption accomplished, peace made, the believer justified by the blood, reconciled to God, and reckoned righteous; having died with Christ, and now alive in Christ, and having the Spirit of Christ dwelling in him. It is, however, blessed to know that every one who is contemplated in Rom. 5 as justified by God and having the Holy Ghost, is also in Christ Jesus, as spoken of in Rom 8, *whether he knows it or not*. In Rom. 5 we have what God has done for us wholly outside ourselves, save giving us the Spirit; and in Rom. 7 and 8 it is God showing how he delivers a distressed soul under law, ready to despair on account of what he finds *in himself* bringing him deliverance through his having died with Christ; thus judicially setting him aside altogether as a man in the flesh, and giving him a totally new standing the other side of death and judgment “in Christ Jesus.” The difference between Rom. 5 and 8 is therefore, one of attainment, but the way God in grace through righteousness has met every believer as to “sins and sin.”

Well might the devoted apostle, after tracing out for us these mercies of God, say, “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost!”

The Closing Days

Behold, I come quickly: hold that FAST which thou hast, that no man take thy crown (Rev. 3:11).

It is often said we are in the closing days of the history of the Assembly of God on earth, and that the coming of our Lord must be now very near; but the question is, Have we any instruction that we can gather from Scripture as to this?

It need scarcely be said here, because it is so generally accepted, that what is written as to "the last times" and "the last days," in the inspired letters to Timothy, has been manifested for a long time; and John speaks of the day in which he lived as "the last time," because there were "many antichrists." In one sense the whole of the Church's history on earth since the time of the apostles, and even the coming of the Savior into the world, is comprehended in the expression "last days." Hence we read, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in *these last days* spoken unto us by His Son." But by the often-used expression "closing days" we understand something more definite than "the last times," or "the last days"; it seems to speak of the time just before the Lord comes with His assembling shout for those that are His at His coming.

If we turn to the second and third chapters of Revelation we there find details given, not only of the actual state of seven assemblies then existing in Asia and the ways of our Lord with them, but we are also told there is some "mystery" as to the instruction communicated by them. Besides their obvious application to the then existing assemblies, there was a line of teaching which was a "mystery," or not revealed. We read, therefore, of the mystery of the seven golden candlesticks (Rev. 1:20).

It is now clear enough that what was then a *prophetic sketch* of the course of the Assembly on earth, as God's corporate witness, is now an *historic sketch*; so that in these seven epistles we can easily trace seven phases of the Church's history on earth. We have declension (Ephesus); persecution (Smyrna); alliance with the world in Constantine's time (Pergamos); Popery (Thyatira); Protestantism (Sardis); saints gathered to Him who is the holy and the true (Philadelphia);³ self-satisfaction and lukewarmness, or indifference to Christ (Laodicea). Every one who knows anything of Church history must be able to trace these seven striking epochs of its course.

It is also obvious that these seven epistles are presented to us as divided into three and four. In the first three epistles the overcomer is mentioned last, or after "He that hath an ear," because their state seemed capable of restoration; but when, in Thyatira, the flesh and the world were openly accredited and associated with the name of the Lord and His truth by His professed witness on earth, the Lord exposes their sad state, and

refers to His coming; and the overcomer is mentioned before "He that hath all ear," etc., because the faithful have to overcome allowed evil in the house. The last four assemblies are thus marked off from the previous three, and in these four only the coming of the Lord is announced, which shows they go on to the end; and to each of them the Lord presents Himself and His coming in an aspect suited to their state. These four phases of the Church's history on earth, we judge, then, will continue till the coming of the Lord, and their principles may be traced at this moment in almost every city, town, and village. All these four assemblies being associated in some way or other, in the Lord's ministry to them, with His coming, seems to intimate that it would be so. Hence we have in Christendom, Popery, and Protestantism, some who are true to the Lord, who is holy and true; and, lastly, lukewarmness to Christ, with self-satisfied profession, which He must reject as His corporate witness on earth when He comes and takes His own unto Himself. "I will spue thee out of my mouth."

If, then, these four assemblies set forth the fourfold character of the professing Church, or Christendom, till the Lord come, of which, we judge, there cannot be a doubt, is it not clear that the fourfold way in which Christ presents Himself to these assemblies must plainly show what His special lines of ministry will be in the closing days of the Church's sojourn on earth? If, therefore, we find that these presentations of Christ do and have for some time past characterized the ministry *given to His saints*, the inference is undeniable, that we are in the closing days of the Church's history on earth. But let us look further at this point.

As we have before noticed, the coming of the Lord is presented in an aspect suited to the state of these assemblies; and to the brightest and most devoted of them He says, "Behold, I come quickly." Besides this, we may observe that to the first of the last four (Thyatira) He presents Himself as the "Son of God"; to the second (Sardis) as "He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars"; to the third (Philadelphia) as "He that is holy, and He that is true"; and to the fourth (Laodicea) as "the Amen, the faithful and true Witness, and the beginning of the creation of God."

It is well known what uncertainty and darkness even true believers were in for many centuries; and even in the early part of this century superstition, priestcraft, unitarianism, and all kinds of false doctrine, were common enough. Few even of the saints were clear of these things, till God raised up faithful servants to set forth, according to Scripture, *the person of the Son of God*.

There were also serious mistakes as to the Holy Spirit; so that His personality, Godhead, and operations were little known, and by some openly denied. But, as regards this, we know how faithfully some contended for the truth as to the person and deity of the Holy Spirit. There can be no doubt when souls lost the truth of the personal glory of the Son of God, they necessarily lost also the hope of His coming; and when they lost the truth of the Holy

3. The reader will do well to note that the characteristics of Philadelphia are -- a little strength, keeping the word of Christ, and not denying His name -- all of which are expressive of condition. -- Ed. of *The Christian Friend*.

Spirit being a divine Person on earth during our Lord's absence, they turned to education, university degrees, and formal ordination as qualifications for ministry, instead of gift. And even at the Reformation, when, by God's mercy, some truth was recovered, when Sardis, or Protestantism, came in, those carnal ways as to ministry were not given up; so that it is worthy of remark, that there the Lord presents Himself as the One who, as Son of man glorified, had received the Holy Spirit, and as having the seven stars, or holding all ministry for the Church in His own hand, and communicating it through gift from Himself. Even to this day some believers are praying for the Holy Ghost to come, instead of thanking God for the abiding presence and power of the Holy Ghost in the professing Church, and in every believer. Still, at this time, through God's mercy, the reality of spiritual "gifts" from Christ, apart from man's arrangement altogether, has been largely recognized; and its importance can scarcely be overrated, because "the body is edified [from the Head] by that which every joint supplieth," and those who practice it know well the truth of it.

Of late years, while almost every one in Christendom has been saying that they meet in Christ's name, God has remarkably wrought in many souls to show the amazing difference between the adoption of it as a part of a creed, and the reality of the Lord Jesus being "in the midst" of those who are really gathered to His name {Matt. 18:20}. No doubt the Holy Spirit is the Gatherer, and He only gathers to His name who has been made in ascension both Lord and Christ. But what has so greatly added to the priceless value of this foundation-truth is the recovery of the knowledge of the blessed fact that He who is in the midst of such so gathered is "holy" and "true"; so that He looks that His word should be kept, and His name not denied; and also, that those so gathered, should be in all their ways suited to Him. How could it be otherwise, if we think of it for a moment? And how could we associate any other name with His, lest we grieve and dishonor Him? This has been a remarkable blessing from God in these closing days.

Moreover, at this time, when every thing is being questioned, and all immense machinery is at work to exalt man in the flesh, and to undermine divine revelation, the Lord Jesus Christ is being made known to souls as "the Amen," whose word is decisive, will never pass away, and is for ever settled in heaven. That we may well trust Him, and rely upon His faithfulness to His own word, for He is "the faithful and true witness"; and be assured that the first man is not recognized by Him since the death of the cross, for He is "the beginning of the creation of God"; so that, "if any man be in Christ," there is a "new creation." This truth has exercised many souls during the last half century, and is, we believe, the teaching God is pressing on His saints to-day; and the believer's comfort and blessing, and his service and pursuits, will be characterized, according as in heart and conscience he is either going on trying to mend and improve man in the flesh, or has accepted God's verdict and ways in the cross of setting aside man in the flesh altogether; and at the same time making us a new creation in Christ, and has seated us in Him in heavenly places -- the only proper Christian position.

The great point of controversy to-day in Christendom is whether the Christian is merely an improved or changed man in the flesh, or whether he is a new creation? Those who hold the former are still of the world, more or less legal, and self-occupied,

with self-satisfaction and indifference to the claims and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who accept the latter know they are in Christ, and He in them; that all their blessings, strength, and completeness before God are in Him, risen and ascended, and that their old man is crucified with Christ, so that they have died, and their life is hid with Christ in God.

Now the question is, What has characterized the Lord's ministry to His saints during the last fifty or sixty years with the testimony to the Lord's coming, which has been going on all this time? Can there be a doubt that the infinite glory and perfection of the person of the Son of God have been largely set forth? Christ too, as having received in ascension the Holy Spirit, and Himself there the source and sustainer of spiritual "gifts" for the edification of His assembly on earth? Who can question also the clear and solemn way in which "there am I in the midst," the "holy," and the "true," has been pressed on the conscience, and lovingly owned by many hearts for amazing comfort, blessing, and some increase of separation and devotedness? Nor need we go far to discern the Laodicean element coming in like a flood, with lukewarmness to Christ and indifference to His word, His claims, and His coming. If these things are so, surely the closing days of the Church on earth are really here. If this fourfold character of the ministry of Christ to His saints on earth till He comes is still going on of which there cannot be a doubt, and we are here instructed that it will be so till He comes -- then it is unquestionable that we are not only in the closing days, but that there is nothing more to be looked for till we see His face. Saints may be unfaithful to the testimony, and be laid aside, and others be raised up for it; but it is clear there is nothing different to come till we hear the assembling shout.

What then are the practical lessons we are to gather from all this? Is it not that we, as already called into the fellowship of the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, should stand for His personal perfections and glory, and honor Him? That we should be subject to the Holy Spirit He has received and sent down to form and energize His assembly, while thankfully acknowledging "gifts" for building up as from Himself, and caring for His household? That, as gathered to His name, we may faithfully own Him in our midst, and His claims, as the holy and the true? And knowing that the first man has been set aside, and has no place in His service, have no confidence in the flesh, but rejoice in the blessed fact that we are a new creation in Christ Jesus, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and waiting and watching for Him who says, "Behold, I come quickly"?

The Coming and the Appearing of Our Lord

We need *all* Scripture. *All* is given for our profit . . . One of our dangers is, being taken up with certain parts of the sacred writings to the neglect of others. In nothing has this been more apparent of late years than the acceptance of our Lords coming for us as our hope, without being exercised also about the Lords reign and judgments at His appearing and kingdom. It is this latter line of things to which Peter refers when he says,

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn (2 Pet. 1:19).

No doubt the light of unfulfilled prophecy, when received in faith, casts its light back on the path we are now treading, and thus clear guidance and much blessing are vouchsafed to those who take heed unto it. The apostle Paul, in writing to Titus, by the Spirit says, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the beat God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Here the Lord's coming and His appearing are connected, as being both looked for; not only "that blessed hope" of our Lord's coming to receive us unto Himself, but His also "appearing" after that in manifested glory, and taking His rightful place on earth as "Heir of all things" and "Lord of all."

It is not that many believers are not *intelligent* as to the events which will follow the Lord's coming for us, and able clearly to distinguish between that blissful moment and our subsequent following Him out of heaven, when "every eye shall see Him"; but for our *hearts* to be in conscious sympathy with our loving Lord Jesus in His present rejection, and to be therefore anticipating with joy, in deep fellowship with Himself, "that glorious appearing, when He will have His rightful place of universal supremacy accorded to Him by all intelligent beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, is quite another thing.

The fact is, that while some have been holding and rightly contending for the truth of "the Church [or assembly] of God," they seem to have let slip the truth of "the kingdom of God." Paul was emphatically a minister of the assembly, but he tells us also that he testified "the gospel of the grace of God," and preached "the kingdom of God" (Col. 1:24, 25; Acts 20:24, 25). Such a prominent place in the apostle's public ministry had the reign of Christ and its kindred subjects that, though his visit to Thessalonica probably did not exceed three weeks, we are told that he suffered persecution for having preached "another King, one Jesus." We know too that during this brief visit he not only instructed the young converts there as to the hope of the Lord's coming, but that they received it as the truth of God, and "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven." And in his second letter, when he referred to "the man of sin," and the Lord's destruction of him "with the brightness of His coming," he said, "Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?" (2 Thess. 2:5, 8).

It is a mistake, we believe, to suppose that we learn prophetic truth for soul profit by merely grouping events together as we would link together a series of political facts. It is easy for an

active mind thus to occupy itself. But to have the *heart* and *conscience*, so moved by the divinely-given "word of prophecy," because it so sheds its light on our present path as to produce walk and conduct suited to it, is a very different thing. For example, it is perfectly true that in a little while it will be said,

The kingdoms of this world are become [the kingdoms] of our Lord, and of his Christ.

If then the Lord's interests are our interests, and we believe He will yet be manifested as Lord of all, how can we have any relish for the political excitement and party struggles of to-day? Why not rather wait till "He shall come whose right it is"; and who said, when nearing the cross, "Now is the judgment of this world"? We are also told that "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10). Do we believe this? How then can we be hankering after the possession of what we know ere long will be under the Lord's judgment? Again: If we hold that Jesus is "Lord of all," and that ere long He will reign till He has put down all rule and all authority and power for the glory of God, how can we desire to be now in the place of authority and power in a world that has rejected Him, and where Satan is its "god" and "prince"? If we receive the word that the Father has committed all judgment unto the Son, and that all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father, and that he that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him, we have certainly a plain path opened out before us -- the path of honoring the Son till we see His face.

And further: Is it not quite clear that this and other countries of Europe, commonly called the ten kingdoms, form the conclusion of the development of Daniel's image, and that a "stone cut out without hands" is yet to smite it, and break it to pieces, which will be carried away, so that no place shall be found for them, and that this will have its solemn fulfilment when the Lord comes to reign and establish His kingdom in the earth? How then can we fall in with the common cry of "peace and safety" when we know that such judgement and destruction are at hand? (Dan. 2:31-35).

It is well known that when, some fifty or sixty year ago, the truth of the coming of the Lord was connected with such faithful testimony and unworldliness, that the coming and the appearing of our Lord were both firmly held. In fact there was then little intelligence as to dividing between the coming of our Lord and His appearing; so that while hearts were lovingly looking for God's Son from heaven, there was also a solemn sense of the coming judgments and kingdom of God. God's truth as to these things was so believed that, with many, there was no other thought than dropping every thing contrary to God's word, and getting *practically* ready for the Lord. No doubt our Lord's coming for us will be the crowning act of divine grace in giving us a body of glory like His own, and taking us to the Father's house; but, after this, we are to be manifested in glory with Him as His joint-heirs, and reign and share His inheritance with Him. How wonderful! "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? . . . know

ye not that we shall judge angels?" Suffering here *now* no doubt if we are faithful to our Lord, but *then* to share His glory. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him"; and again, "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (2 Tim. 2:12; Rom. 8:17).

Formerly the truth of our Lord's coming, and also of His appearing and kingdom, were *believed*, and therefore had not a little *practical* power. It was a question of honoring the Lord at all costs, as His loved ones who would soon reign with Him. The question has often been asked lately, "Why has not the truth of the Lord's coming more power now?" The answer surely is, first, Because the truth is more assented to than received into the *heart* as God's testimony, therefore there is not the getting ready *practically* for our Lord's coming; and, secondly, because the *heart* is in little sympathy with the Lord in His present rejection, and therefore is little exercised as to His appearing. Truth is so common at this time, that it is often trifled with; or it may be accepted as reasonable and self-evident, without much exercise of heart and conscience before God.

The fact is that these truths are eminently sanctifying. How can they be otherwise? To suppose, therefore, that we can really hold them as divinely-given doctrines, and go on in worldly and carnal associations, is to do the greatest violence to them. If we really believe that it is possible the Lord may come for us before midnight, could we go on with anything *today* which we knew would be displeasing to Him? Should we not rather choose to suffer for His sake, and do what we know would suit His mind? If we are truly waiting and watching for His return could we spend a day without caring in some way or other for some of the members of His body? And is not caring for His household one of the special marks of a wise and faithful servant? (Matt. 24:45). Moreover, if we believe God's word, that the world lieth in the wicked one, and is under judgment, and the Judge soon coming in flaming fire to carry it out, and judge the quick and the dead, how can our hearts but rejoice at the thought of the once humbled Nazarene having His rightful place on this earth as King of kings and Lord of lords

Do we really *love* His appearing? Do our hearts burn within us at the thought that in a little while He will be publicly manifested as "Lord of all"? We doubt not that the comfort of accomplished redemption, the consciousness of His present ministry and care of us while He is hid in the glory, and heartfelt sympathy with Him as to His present rejection, will accompany *loving* His appearing. How strange it must appear to the authorities and powers in heavenly places, who know by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, that we are so little moved and acted on by the prospect of the Savior's appearing and reign! But when we are stirred in our inmost souls to be practically getting ready for His coming, then will the hope be known in brightness and power; and the more we ponder what He has told us about our reigning with Him, the more we shall realize His present rejection, and *love* His appearing. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and of things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

Does it not fill our hearts with joy to see Him now crowned with glory and honor? Are we not assured that His exaltation has been merited, for having glorified the Father on earth, and finished the work that He gave Him to do? And can we view Him there, where angels, authorities, and powers are all subject to Him, without delight springing up in our souls? Made "Lord and Christ" in ascension, He is surely "Lord of all"; though as to the earth He has not yet taken to Himself His great power and reigned. Still, it is only a question of time, and the present long-suffering is salvation; but what will it be to see His face, and to be with Him, and like Him for ever? What will it be to follow Him out of heaven, when He comes forth in power and great glory, wearing His many crowns, to judge first the living, and afterward the dead? No doubt "every eye shall see Him" then; the nations too will be angry, and all the tribes of the land shall wail because of Him, but come He will; for Jehovah has said unto Him, "Sit Thou on my right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool." And again we are told,

This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever [or in perpetuity] sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool (Heb. 10:12, 13).

How soon we may hear the shout! May we meanwhile seek to serve and honor Him, in living "soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing [or the appearing of the glory] of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:12-14).

"Oh, may the glorious vision fire
Our hearts with ardent love,
Till wings of faith, and strong desire,
Bear every thought above!"

The Coming of Our Lord

If He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch (Luke 12:38).

Watch after watch has passed, and our Lord has not yet come. Still, however, His word, "I come quickly," abides in all its eternal freshness and truth; and long ago the Spirit said, "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand." How soon then He may be here!

In the *first* watch of the night there were some saved ones on earth who waited for Him, and, as far as we can gather from the Spirit's record of their state, were so deeply attached to the Lord Jesus as the hope of their hearts that they were ready to open to Him immediately. They "went forth to meet the Bridegroom" This blessed hope, however, soon declined; it did not last long. Worldly associations and circumstances took hold of their hearts, and so far displaced Christ, that the appalling sentence could be truthfully written, "While the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept"; yes, "all slumbered and slept," so that this bright and blessed hope for a long time was lost.

The time of the second watch arrived, and passed away, and the Bridegroom did not come; but "at midnight," the closing moments of the second watch, instead of our Lord coming, He sent forth an awakening cry -- "At midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the Bridegroom; go ye out to meet Him." Then our Lord's prophetic words were fulfilled, for there was a general awakening, and hearts in different parts of the earth were stirred toward Him. "Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps." This was "at midnight," at the close of "the second watch," and, we judge, began about sixty years ago. We are told it was at midnight when this cry went forth, and then it was that the third watch began. Although for many centuries the blessed hope of our Lord's coming was, speaking generally, lost, yet there was occasionally an individual who had something of the Lord's mind as to this. For example, a friend of the writer lately copied the following inscription from a monument "Here lies, expecting the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the body of Henry Clifford, first earl of Cumberland, who died in Skipton Castle, April 22nd, 1542."

The *third* watch, then, has not only begun but must now be far advanced. According to the Jewish mode of reckoning, it extended from midnight to three in the morning, when the fourth watch commenced. This was the "cockcrowing" We are therefore now some way on in the third watch.

The *fourth* watch goes on to the beginning of the day. In the fourteenth of Matthew, where we see our Lord alone in the mountain praying, and, leaving that, walking on the sea to comfort His disciples, and to bring them safely to their earthly rest and blessing (typical, as we judge, of the Jewish remnant to be brought into blessing after we are translated), it was in the fourth watch of the night. It is well also to note that, while at first they were distressed, they were soon comforted and brought safely to land, and then blessing extended to others on the earth, which we know will be the case with and through the Jewish remnant when the

Deliverer comes out of Zion, and turns away ungodliness from Jacob.

The Lord's coming for us cannot be far off. Though we look not for events, but for the Lord himself, yet many events show that "the day," which sets in after we are gone, is "approaching." Speaking according to prophetic instruction, *the day of the Lord* begins at sunrise, or the Lord coming with His saints in manifested glory as "the Sun of Righteousness" to bring healing to His ancient people, to shine gloriously on them that fear His name, and to tread down the wicked, and make them as ashes under the soles of their feet (Mal. 4:2, 3). But "the Bright and Morning Star," for which we wait, must be before that. As such, He is the Hope of the Church of God. His last presentation of Himself to His Church on earth, to comfort and attract our hearts heavenward to Himself, was, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star"; and He added, "Surely I come quickly." What should our warm and constant response to such grace be then but, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"?

How very solemn, then, as well as cheering, are the words of our Lord: "If He shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so [that is, watching], blessed are those servants." May we hear His voice to us in these encouraging words, and not only wait for Him, but watch; for, said He, "What I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:37).

"The Father Loveth the Son"

That the Son loved the Father, His perfect obedience, faith, subjection, and entire surrender of Himself to the Fathers will fully prove. But what an object of infinite and unchanging love was He ever to the Father's heart! What a sweet savor was He always to God in life and in death! What a delight was He to the Father by the Jordan! and again in the holy mount, where others were eye-witnesses of His majesty! On each occasion the voice from the excellent glory declared, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Never was there such a testimony from heaven before.

The Son also *declared* the Father. This He did not in word only, though He spake the words of God, and the Father who sent Him gave Him a commandment what He should say, and what He should speak; but also as to the *works* He did He could say, "The Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the *works*." And is it not also true that He so manifested the Father in every detail, that if one had known Him he would have known the Father also? Thus the Son from heaven so declared the Father, that those who hated Him hated His Father also, and those who believed on Him believed on the Father who had sent Him; for "Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on Him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth Him that sent me." How blessed then it is to find our Lord saying to His disciples, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"; and yet as the sent One He could add, when leaving the world, "I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I" (John 12:44-50; 14:6-31).

In seeing the Father as revealed in and by the Son, we recall to mind the Father's eternal counsel, purpose, and grace toward us in Him before the world was; and in His life and death we see divine love, and all the claims of divine righteousness and truth fully met, and God thus vindicated, glorified, and satisfied in this wondrous way of bringing blessing to us; so that divine power can now be for us, and not against us. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

"The Father loveth the Son"; for divine, infinite, unchanging, eternal love ever has and ever must subsist between the Father and the Son. Hence the Holy Spirit, according to one of His present operations for our blessing, is taking of the things of the Father and the Son when He is pleased to say, "The Father loveth the Son"; and to show the perfection of the love, He adds, "and hath given all things into His hands," which sets before us not only the Deity of the Son, as thereby being capable of receiving all things into His hands, which no creature could do, but also the perfection of the Fathers love in having no reserve in thus giving everything into His hands. What other object could satisfy the Father's heart? How is it possible the Father could withhold anything from Him who could speak of Himself when on earth as "the Son of man who is in heaven"? Here we have perfect love in power-giving all things into His hands.

Again we read, "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth" "communicates the secrets of

the heart without any reserve. Nor is the honor to be given to the Son less than that which is due to the Father. Not only does the Son of man, who is also Son of God, quicken whom He will, and has all judgment committed unto Him, but "all should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father"; so that to slight the Son would be to dishonor the Father. "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him." Thus we see that perfect love not only gives its object -- that is, in divine relationship with the Father -- "all things," and reposes such complete confidence as to show Him all things, but puts Him also in the place of equal honor with the Father. Nor is this all. For where could be the resting place of love for the Son so loved but the Father's bosom? We read therefore of Him as "the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father." This surely is the resting-place of divine and infinite love; and certainly no other place could suit the Father who loveth the Son, or the Son who loveth the Father, infinitely, eternally, and unchangeably. Thus was the Son in the resting-place of perfect love, and knew no reserve with the Father as to power, confidence, or honor. It is true that the Father thus loved the Son in life, and in His death the Son showed that He loved the Father; so that the Father there found an additional motive for loving the Son, as He said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again"; for in it He had perfectly loved, honored, and glorified the Father under the most adverse and trying circumstances (John 10:17).

The Son was always the central object of the Father's counsels and grace, and now glorified is the central object of the ways of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in goodness and grace, as He will be in power and judgment when He takes His great power and reigns. In His commendatory prayer to the Father, as recorded in John 17, the Son referred seven times to believers as the Father's gift to Him. He very often spoke of Himself as the sent One of the Father; but we are also taught that this sent One was the loved Son, whose glory to faith was the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. It was His own Son that God delivered up for us all, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. It was the Son whom in due time the Father so graciously revealed to us and in us, and thus drew us to Him for our eternal salvation. When Peter confessed that the Son of man standing by him was "the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee" but my Father which is in heaven." And Paul speaks of it having pleased God to reveal His Son in him. Our Lord also plainly said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me"; and no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him . . . Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (Matt. 16:17; Gal. 1:16; John 6:37, 44, 45, 65).

Thus the object of such infinite love, and the One who was always so perfectly loving, was sent by the Father to save. "The

Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world"; and He lovingly and obediently came into the world to glorify the Father in redeeming us from all iniquity, that, when risen from among the dead, He might bring us into living association and relationship with Himself and the Father, and, as Man, enter into the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. There we see Him crowned with glory and honor. There we have to do with Him, assured too by Himself that the glory which the Father has given Him He has given us; and that it is His desire to have us with Himself, that we may behold His glory, which we know must be with ineffable delight. We know Him there upholding all things, and in faithful love sustaining, restoring, and comforting us by the various offices He fills. We know Him there too as the glorified Man, having angels, authorities, and powers made subject unto Him; as having all power given to Him in heaven and in earth, and soon to rise up from that throne on which He now sits, when this world will most certainly know that He is sitting on His own throne. And He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet, and subdued all things unto Himself, thus putting down all rule and authority and power.

Unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows (Heb. 1:3, 9).

It is to the Son that the Holy Spirit now directs us, and gives us to *know* that He is in the Father, and that we are in Him, and He in us. He is our righteousness, and we have no other. He is our life, and all our resources are in Him; so that, being no longer in the first man, but standing in the cloudless favour of God in the second man who has redeemed us, we are taught to live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

It was then the unspeakable gift of the only begotten Son that was sent forth by the Father to be a sacrifice for sin. It was the Son in the bosom of the Father who became flesh; some little inferior to angels for the suffering of death, that we might be with Him, and in love without blame before the Father for ever. What love! How abundantly it met our need, and fills our hearts with praise and thanksgiving! Is it any marvel that an apostle by the Spirit should say to us, "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God"? "Beloved, now are we the children of God." Can any relationship be more endearing or more lasting? The work of righteousness and grace on which all is founded has been done, and the Son who did it has glory with the Father given Him as the only adequate recompense according to divine righteousness for such a mighty and God-glorifying work; and having done it for us, we become therefore entitled to the gift of righteousness -- the righteousness of God by faith. What grace! Grace too which reigns through righteousness. Moreover, by the rending of the veil of the temple from the top to the bottom, the raising of the Son from among the dead by the glory of the Father, and setting Him at His own right hand in the heavens, the cooping down of the Holy Spirit, the promise of the Father, after the Son's exaltation, and sealing and indwelling all who know the cleansing power of the blood of the cross, clearly manifest God's perfect satisfaction with that finished work for us.

When we meditate on the infinite perfection and love of the Son, and what He was to the Father before the world was, and when here as Man in the bosom of the Father counted worthy of all power, all confidence, and all honor, a sweet savor, and glorifying the Father every step of His path, we realize something of what an amazing gift it was when God gave His only begotten Son that we might live through Him. To give Him too to make propitiation for the sins of such unclean and loathsome sinners, knowing that in delivering Him up for our offences it involved nothing less than His being forsaken of God, suffering all the judgment due to, our sins, the Holy One being made sin for us, and treated as if He, the intrinsically pure and spotless One, were guilty and unclean! Who can fathom such love? How true it is that God only knows the love of God! How incompetent we feel to rightly estimate such a gift! What love to us must have been in the Father's heart to send Him, to give Him, to spare not His own Son for us! Infinite love arrests us here! We think of it, and are lost in wonder, love, and praise. We try to speak of it, and find our warmest utterances are so cold and scanty that we can only say it is an unspeakable gift. How it would draw out our inmost souls in worshiping the Father as His dear children, and in longing for the Father's house, if we could better estimate the deep reality of His love in sending His own Son to be the propitiation for our sins!

The Power of Grace

2 Tim. 2:1, 2

Divine grace, or the free and unmerited favour of God to undeserving objects, is the source of all our blessings. We were sinners, and justly exposed to the wrath of God; we were utterly unclean, and entirely unworthy of anything but judgment. It was when we were “sinners,” and “without strength,” that Christ died for us. All hope then, and confidence in God, is founded on *divine grace*; not that *righteousness* could possibly be excluded; hence it is written, “That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might *grace reign through righteousness* unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 5:21).

Timothy had been reminded in the first chapter of the “grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began,” and is here, as the Lord’s servant and the apostle’s child in the faith, enjoined to be “*strong in the grace* that is in Christ Jesus” as the spring of all true service. Elsewhere saints were exhorted to “be *strong in the Lord*, and in the power of His might”; but here our strength is from divine grace -- “the grace that is in Christ Jesus.”

We can never forget when first the grace of God, as expressed in the death of His Son, dawned upon our guilty, sin-stricken souls. So sweet was God’s declaration of His marvelous love to us in the gospel, that, instead of being overtaken with divine wrath, and judged for our sins, we found that God, though just, was our Savior, and that His grace in and through Christ Jesus brought unto us eternal salvation. Nor can we fail to remember the preciousness of the first ray of hope that rose upon our desponding hearts and burdened consciences, when we found that, sinful and unclean as we were, divine love brought to us eternal salvation as the free and wholly unmerited gift of God. This was *grace* indeed!

But more than this. After dwelling on the unutterable agony, the unmingled sorrows -- on what it cost the Savior to bring us into such blessings, we became filled with wonder, love, and praise, as we drank more deeply of the grace of God, and knew that Jesus was raised again for our justification. Not only was He “delivered for *our offences*,” but “was raised again for *our justification*.” Yes, it was for *us*; “for by Him all that believe are justified from all things” (Rom. 4; Acts 13:39) What marvelous grace that could thus justify the ungodly, and reckon us righteous on the principle of faith without works! As another has said, “We believe in a God who has intervened in *power* to raise Him from among the dead, who had borne our *offences*, and who, being raised, is the eternal witness that our sins are put away.”

We are further taught by the Spirit, through the Word, that Christ, who had vindicated, satisfied, and glorified God about our sins, had thus merited as Man the highest exaltation. He was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Wherefore* God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name,” etc. And as the work of the cross was *for us*, we must be therefore *with* Him for ever. If divine righteousness set Him on the Father’s throne, divine grace through righteousness must bring us into the Father’s house; for the Savior suffered for

us, and He must see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. Hence, said the Son to the Father, “The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them . . . Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory” (John 17:22, 24).

But even now, while in a mortal body, and waiting for God’s Son from heaven, we know that divine grace has brought us into new relationships, and set us in a totally new and unchanging position before God. We are thus no longer looked at as children of Adam, but children of God; not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, though we often painfully feel that the flesh is in us. We *know*, on the authority of God’s word, that our old man has been crucified with Christ, that we have died with Christ; thus we have now no standing in the flesh, and our history as to the first man is for ever closed by the death and judgment of the cross. We *know* also that when we were dead in sins, God, in His rich mercy, put life into our souls. We were quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places *in* Christ Jesus; and by the gift and indwelling of the Holy Spirit are united to Him forever, who is the Head of the body, the Church. Thus we are always looked at by God, where His grace and power have set us, as in Christ, complete, or filled full, in Him in whom the fulness of the Godhead bodily dwells. What marvelous heights of blessing then we have been brought into by the grace of God in and through Christ Jesus!

But more than all this, blessed be God, there is grace in Christ Jesus to care for and minister to us every step of the way. However much we are debtors to Him for grace, still He saith, “He giveth more grace.” No doubt divine government works also concerning us, and “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”; still, withal, God waiteth to be gracious. All His ways toward us are according to “perfect love”; and even chastisement is for our profit, and that we may be partakers of His holiness. Moreover, whatever be the humiliation, or sorrow, or suffering we may have to pass through, still the Lord says, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” This grace we are to reckon on for every part of the wilderness journey, and the crowning act of divine grace will be to conform us to the image of His Son. Even now, as we have seen, as to our *standing*, we are always before God -- “in the Beloved,” in His cloudless favor, objects of the Father’s love and care as His “dear children”; we are also under the constant ministry of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and under the unceasing oversight of the Lord Jesus, who is for us before the face of God, and ever active on our behalf according to our need. What abundance of grace! How true it is that the Father loves us as He loved His Son; that He has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ”; that He is bringing “many sons to glory,” and “that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (John 17:23, 26; Eph. 2:7).

Divine grace meets our hearts, and establishes our confidence in God. "We love Him, because He first loved us." We may possibly have our minds well stored with orthodox doctrines, and be filled with knowledge which puffeth up; but the truth in the love of it is another thing. We may be also taken up with ordinances, or human inventions and traditions, while the heart is barren and unfruitful toward God. We are told, therefore, that "it is a good thing that the *heart* be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein"; while we are warned against being "carried about with divers and strange doctrines" (Heb. 13:9). Divine grace makes God known in goodness, and brings present and eternal blessings to us. Thus God is made known as having come near in Christ to love, bless, and keep us forever. Nor are these ways of grace limited toward us; for yet it is said, as we have before noticed, that "He giveth more grace," and His present throne is a "throne of grace" to which we are invited to come boldly to "obtain mercy, and to find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Is it any marvel then that another apostle should be directed by the Spirit to speak of "the *true grace of God wherein ye stand*," of "the *grace that is to be brought*" to us "at the revelation of Jesus Christ," and of God as "the *God of all grace*, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus"? (1 Pet. 1:13; 5:10, 12).

There is nothing that will enable us to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart like the enjoyment of "the grace" which is in Him; nothing so constrain us to seek His honor, and to live not unto ourselves, but to Him who died and rose again for us; nothing so separate us unto Him, and detach us from what is contrary to His mind; nothing so fortify us against the doctrines and deceivableness of men's traditions, and enable us to bear loss and suffering for the truth's sake with cheerfulness. Apart from the sense of divine grace, we easily lose the joy of the Father's love, and the sense of His delight in us, and then gradually slide into the love of the world. If we do not abide in Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us, how can we serve and honor Him?

But there is *truth* to be preserved, as well as *grace* to do it. "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Both were perfectly manifested in Him; and such as are strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus are admonished to care for the truth. "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." God's present truth as to His assembly; the gift, indwelling, and operations of the Holy Spirit here during our Lord's absence; the hope of our Lord's coming; and the walk in love, obedience, and righteousness suited to it, were at that moment in jeopardy; for all in Asia had turned away from Paul, and he expected that many would "turn away their ears from *the truth*, and shall be turned unto fables." He, therefore, urges Timothy to be courageous, and to maintain the truth at all costs, and use every true means for its continuance by committing it to faithful men (2 Tim. 2:2).

Observe, it is not *useful* men here, but *faithful* men; those whose hearts are set on pleasing God, and keeping His Word. To others the truth of God is of little value; but to the faithful, walking in "the truth," and contending earnestly "for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," are matters of the gravest importance. Such do not judge the truth, but let the truth judge them. They rejoice in the divine authenticity of the written Word,

and bow to its authority as final and decisive. The truth reveals Christ, and Christ is the truth. It exposes and warns us against the doctrines and traditions of men, whether they appear in a rationalistic or ritualistic garb. Nothing can be more positive than the truth. Well, then, might an aged apostle say, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth." If, when the Galatian believers slipped away from grace, they had little regard for the truth of God, -- and walked carnally, so we may be assured that it is only by our being "strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus," that we shall really love "the truth," and seek to spread it for the glory of God.

The Word and Spirit

One of the greatest errors of the day is the practical separation of the written word of God from the teaching of the Spirit of God. Let the Christian reader ponder it well; for it is a mistake so common and so serious as to be fatal to true, spiritual-mindedness, and demands our constant care and watchfulness. The insubjection of the mind of man to God, and confidence in his own competency to deal with the truth, have so largely set aside the habit of dependence on the divinely-given power of the Holy Spirit that "the last days," according to Scripture, are now clearly marked by "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." No doubt man has natural ability for understanding the things of earth, and for adapting them to his own advantage; but we are told that "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God"; "that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2). Nothing can more clearly show our entire dependence on the Spirit of God, either to know, to receive, to discern, or, we may add also, to communicate, "the things of God."

It is easy to understand that Satan would always seek to set aside, if possible, whatever may be the *present* work of God on the earth. When it was a question of owning the only true God as Jehovah, then he brought in idolatry, for which God had to send His people into captivity. Now the Holy Ghost has come to bear witness to Christ and His finished work during His absence in glory, the competency of man is vainly asserted as able to discern, receive, and minister the things of God. The coming down from heaven of the Holy Spirit to abide with us forever, consequent upon Jesus being glorified, which is the great characteristic of Christianity, is therefore, in His present activities, not owned, but practically set aside. Not that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is not held in some measure, but His present offices are so little regarded that He is both grieved and quenched. It is this practical acquaintance with Him, as the Teacher and Guide into all the truth, the Glorifier and Testifier of the Son through the written Word, to which we now refer. Nor have we a doubt that the chief reason why His power is not more known publicly and corporately is because He is not better known by us personally and privately.

Some, however, have gone into the other extreme, of professing to have the guidance of the Spirit *apart from the Word* and have therefore fallen into ways of the most extravagant folly and error. But to have an ear to hear what God says in His word, in conscious dependence on the teaching and guidance of His Spirit, is clearly what Scripture enjoins. To separate therefore the Word and the Spirit must be fatal to a true and happy apprehension of the mind and will of God. All through Scripture, not only in type, but in the plainest possible instruction, we find the two so joined together that we "hear what the Spirit saith" when we hearken to "the word of God."

In the very opening of the sacred writings we have the Word and the Spirit. God spake, and the Spirit of God moved. Then for

many generations the word of the Lord, by Moses and the prophets, was both written and spoken by the Spirit; for "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." The tabernacle and its furniture, vessels, coverings, and priestly vestments, with their precious stones, so typical of Christ, were made by Bezaleel when "filled with the Spirit of God," according to the word of Moses, which he had received from Jehovah, who showed him the pattern in the mount. In the wilderness journey the manna in the morning fed them, while the springing water from the rock which had been smitten satisfied their thirst. All through God dwelt among them, and ministered His word to them, and neglect to hearken to His word was soon followed by forgetting God. In the land, if God's glory filled the house, the ministry of His word by prophets every now and then was given. Like the widow's cruse of oil and barrel of meal, both continued, and could literally sustain the prophet in his ministration of God's word by the Spirit. Nor can we fail to notice that when the gracious revival of faithfulness to Jehovah occurred in those who came back from the captivity, what a careful return there was to act on the word "as it is written"; while the prophet assured them that God would be faithful to His word, and that His Spirit was with them, as when they came out of Egypt (Hag. 2:5).

It is interesting, too, to observe, that the faithful remnant, in Jerusalem and around, before our Lord came, who looked for redemption, were clearly occupied with the word of God, and under a great power of the Holy Spirit. Their fervent utterances, according to Scripture, show this; and here, as all through, we find those who were occupied with the Word and in the path of the Spirit were taken up with Him of whom the Word and Spirit so abundantly testify. In Simeon's case he not only looked for the Redeemer, according to the testimony of the prophets, but it was revealed to him by the Spirit, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. We therefore see him "led by the Spirit into the temple" where the Savior was, whom he at once recognized, took Him up in his arms, and bowed in worship to Jehovah. The utterance of the heart therefore of this Spirit-led servant of Jehovah was, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to *thy word*" (Luke 2). We cannot contemplate such a scene, and ponder also the statements recorded of Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, and Anna, without noticing how frequently that which is written was on their lips; while we are told again and again that it was the power of the Holy Spirit which was upon them which produced such fervent utterances. We cannot fail to mark how constantly Scripture presents the word and Spirit in this near connection. When the Holy Spirit came down, as recorded in the second chapter of the Acts, we read that those who were filled with the Spirit not only declared with intense earnestness to those around the wonderful works of God, but so much were they occupied with the word of God that it is added "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine." Again, in the fourth chapter we are told "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness"; and often

after this it is said they were led of the Spirit, ~~and~~ *the word of the Lord* was published by them.

We need scarcely remind the Christian reader that in our Lord Himself we have the perfect Exemplar of One being always led by the Spirit, and on every occasion walking in the truth, and contending for the divine authority of the written Word. He whom God the Father sealed, on whom the Spirit came down and in whom He took up His abode, was wont to say, "It is written," and put His adversaries to silence by a sentence of Holy Scripture. When speaking too of the new birth, He so connected the Word and Spirit, that He said, "Except a man be born of water [the Word, see [I Peter 1:23] and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

As we have seen, the testimony of the apostles, both in their oral ministry as recorded in the Acts, and their written ministry in the epistles, was always to the divine certainty of the Word. They often referred to the personal actings, indwelling, anointing, and operations of the Holy Spirit, while they themselves were taught and led and filled with the Spirit, and were constantly quoting from the written Word.

In the Apocalypse John is said to be "in the Spirit," in order to enter into the divinely-given lines of truth which were communicated to him. And in the last page of the inspired volume we have the Spirit and the Bride saying, "Come" to the Lord Jesus; while the most solemn warnings are added against adding to or taking from "the words of the book of this prophecy."

Nor should we overlook the precious and soul-stirring fact that there is almost always a third truth given its with these testimonies to the actings, together of the Word and the Spirit; namely, their ministrations of Christ. Who does not see in the first man a figure of Him that was to come -- His death, resurrection, and the presentation of His bride which followed? And why was the third day's creation twice pronounced "good," when living things sprang up where previously there had been barrenness, but to tell us of the goodness of God in creation, and also of resurrection on the third day in reference to redemption? In the vast variety of types and shadows which God has given us by Moses, most are familiar with the precious instruction as to the person, sacrifice, and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ. Nor were prophets and the writers of the Psalms failing in testifying of Christ, as our Lord informed us; for after His resurrection, from among the dead He said, "All things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44)

In the Acts also it is said of those who were filled with the Holy Spirit, not only that "they spake the word of God with boldness," but, it is added, "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Stephen, too, full of the Holy Spirit, went largely through Scripture in addressing his angry hearers, and died under their wicked hands testifying to his being so occupied with Christ in glory that, like Him when suffering on the cross, he could pray for his murderers; while in all the writings of the apostles we find them unable to write many verses, whatever the subject, without recurring to the personal, moral, or official glories of Christ, or the glory of His path of humiliation, or His perfections either toward God or for us -- in some way or other Christ is presented to us in the Word by the

Spirit. This surely is a threefold cord; which cannot easily be broken. May we mark it well, and hold it fast.

Now, what are we to gather from what Scripture teaches as to the Word and the Spirit? Among other lessons, that, the written Word having been indited by the Spirit, we need His power to bring it home to our hearts, and reveal and minister to us the deep things of God. Can we fail also to notice that when the Spirit acts by the Word in us, it will be connected with the ministry of Christ, and produce in its conduct according to Him? If then we in self-sufficiency allow the intellect without the Spirit to work on the word of God, we may be puffed up with knowledge, and manifest a low walk while professing to hold the highest doctrines. But when we are occupied with the Word, as subject to its divine authority, in dependence on the teaching of the Holy Spirit, then shall we care not only for one or two particular lines of truth, but for all it teaches. There will be consistency in every path we are called to walk in. We shall heed the Lord's mind as to our relation to Him in the assembly, as to our personal conduct and private walk, and shall have a conscience, too, as to honoring God in our family relationships and duties. When a believer is not consistent as to general conduct, it may, we believe, be often traced to the practical separation of the word of God and the Spirit of God. If our habit be to pray over the Scriptures, to ponder them in dependence on the Holy Spirit, and thus they become food to our souls, how is it possible that our conversation and written communications could be without the ministry of Christ? May the Scriptures we have looked at as to the word of God and the Spirit of God, connected, as we have seen, with the ministry of Christ, so exercise our hearts and consciences as to give its fresh delight in turning prayerfully and humbly to the written Word, and in looking for the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Waiting and Watching

Ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord . . . Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching (Luke 12:36, 37).

Our Lord would have us “watch” as well as “wait” for His coming. Both imply spiritual activity. Waiting souls are certainly not sleeping; for waiting according to our Lord’s mind must be with *girded loins*, diligence in His service, and *lights burning*, thus bearing clear testimony to Him in the power of the Holy Spirit during the darkness of the night.

There seems, however, to be something more earnest and definite in watching than in waiting, though all who are watching are also waiting for Him. We can understand three persons having heard that a well-known friend is expected to land at a certain seaport. One of them seems much interested at the intelligence, but it does not produce any alteration in his walk and ways. He knows his friend is coming, and is satisfied with the knowledge of it. The second man is so affected by the sure tidings of his friend’s return that he goes to meet him. He soon finds his way to the seaport, and determines there to remain till his friend comes. He is waiting. Day after day passes, and the friend has not come. Still he waits. Though he is often seen occupying his time and means in self-pleasing, he waits on day by day thinking often of his friend, and his interests. But the third man not only goes to the seaport, and awaits the arrival of his coming friend, but he looks over the sea many times a day, makes every enquiry as to the expected vessel, and carefully inspects the passengers to see if his friend is among them. This one is *watching*. Our Lord would have the hope of His coming so real in us that it should stir our hearts to go out to meet Him -- to be watching as well as waiting, and that not on special occasions merely, but as the posture of our souls continually; thus giving a color, unconsciously perhaps, yet nevertheless really, to all our ways. Nothing can be more practical or more eminently sanctifying --

He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure (1 John 3:3).

This is more than knowledge of doctrine, for it is divine truth received into the heart in faith, so that the heart goes out after the Lord Himself with longing desire and expectation of seeing Him; it is the “blessed hope” of our souls, and He would have us “abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.” “This hope,” then, when it is a reality in our hearts, “purifieth” even as He is pure. It purifies not according to the low standard of Christendom’s estimate of Christianity, but owns no standard of purity but Christ -- “as He is pure.” It teaches us to separate ourselves from everything, whether men call it good or bad, that is unsuited to His mind who is the “holy” and the “true.” May He graciously strengthen this hope in us. What need have we to cry in these closing days, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe”?

Those who are able to go back fifty years or more in marking the ways of God, cannot have forgotten the striking effects of the preaching of the Lord’s coming at that time. Those who announced the midnight cry, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him,” carried conviction to the hearers by their

walk and ways that they were themselves getting ready to meet Him. It was the coming of the Lord Himself they had before them. *Then it was not so much a question of doctrine, but of meeting Him.* One and another saw it plainly taught in the Word as the blessed hope of the Church, and marveled that it had been lost so long. Many received the truth in faith, and therefore acted on it. Like the Thessalonian believers, they waited for God’s Son from heaven, though their views were very defective as to details concerning it; nevertheless, the Lord Himself was their hope and expectation. So plainly and solemnly was He set forth as quickly coming, both in preaching and teaching, that sinners were aroused in conscience, and cried out, “What must I do to be saved?” and believers almost everywhere were aroused from slumber. Wherever the testimony went forth there was almost always an awakening, though it was resisted by some of the wise of this world, and ridiculed by others. Many believers were so stirred in heart and conscience as to desire in all their ways to be “found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless.” It was to them truly a *purifying* hope. At whatever cost to themselves, they felt the preceptive teaching of Scripture to “do all for the glory of God” must be carried out; so that a deep heart-searching enquiry was awakened in souls in many places as to whether they were ready, not merely as to title, but as to walk and service, to meet the Bridegroom? It was not death they looked for, not judgment, but the Lord Himself, their loving Bridegroom, to take His loved ones to be for ever with Himself.

The effects were such as might have been expected. Many felt they were in positions and circumstances which were not for the glory of God, and gave them up. Godly ministers relinquished valuable livings, and those among them who had “gifts” used them as the Lord opened their path. Military and naval officers resigned their rank and pay. Those who resided in large and expensive houses were content with smaller, to enable them to minister more largely to the Lord’s servants and the poor members of the body of Christ. Costly furniture was disposed of. Ladies who before had moved in fashion and elegance, sold their expensive dresses, jewelry, ornaments, and other superfluities, in order to minister with the proceeds to the distressed in the household of faith. Even in the humbler classes, and those whose means were narrow, consciences were exercised that house and household might be so orderly as to have the Lord’s approval; and many a household servant had thus the Lord before her in her daily work. No doubt there was also with this failure and mistake, but many of those here referred to were personally known to us; and their devotedness and testimony continued much the same during a long life.

Nor is it remarkable that the hope of our Lord’s coming thus solemnly dawning on a heart fresh and fervent toward Him should produce such results; for how could it be otherwise? Again and again have we seen the same thing, when souls have rightly had

the possibility of the Lord's coming at any time before them. It must be so as long as the imperishable truth of God declares,

He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.

Thank God the reality of this has not wholly died out. His Spirit still works, and His word is as authoritative and unalterable as ever. But, alas! instead of some now, who accept the doctrine of our Lord's coming, taking up their cross to suffer with Christ and for Christ in this time of His rejection by the world, they appear to be on good terms with the world, are gratified at their own progress in it, and long to see their children advanced positionally beyond themselves in it, and yet talk not a little about the Lord's coming. It sometimes looks as if they were bringing back again those very things which many faithfully separated from fifty years ago. May God graciously arouse us all not only to truly hold the doctrine, but to be lovingly waiting and watching for Him who says, "Surely I come quickly!"

Collection of Pamphlets

Is a Believer a Child of God, or a Miserable Sinner?

Short Papers for Believers -- First Series, No. 2.

The question is whether Scripture speaks of a person, who believes with the heart on the Son of God salvation, as *a sinner*, or as *a child of God*? Scripture says, "When we *were yet sinners*, Christ died for us." Further on in the same epistle we are told, "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that *we are children of God*" (Rom. 5:8, 8:16). Nothing can be clearer, for we were sinners, we are children of God. As sinners we practically evil in God's sight, with a in which dwells "no good thing," which is capable only of sinning, and is "without strength." Hence we were characterized in Scripture as "sinners," and, blessed be His name, it was such Jesus came into the world to save. We *were*, as we sometimes say,

"By nature, and by practice far,
How very far from God!"

But those who have received the Son of God as their Savior are born of God; they *are children of God* by a new birth; for

as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons [children] of God, even to them that believe on His name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12, 13).

Moreover, they have remission of sins, "are justified from all things" -- God being the Justifier -- and have received the Holy Ghost to dwell in them as God's seal, and the earnest of the inheritance -- all of God's grace surely, and to the praise of His glory. Such, and more, is true of every one who has been thus drawn to the Son of God as a sinner to a Savior (see Acts 10:43; 13:38, 39; Rom. 3:24; 5:5).

It is this present blessing, and most endearing relationship of children in which the believer stands toward God our Father, which Christendom so practically ignores. It is being effected in two ways --

1st, By every one claiming to be a child, and addressing God as Father, without being really born of God; and

2ndly, By those who are truly God's children dropping the relationship as a known and enjoyed reality, and calling themselves *miserable sinners*. Thus God is dishonored, His word let slip, the platform of the new creation, on which in marvelous grace He has set us, refused; and, instead of praising God as the continual fruit of our lips, for what He has so marvelously done for us in Christ

Jesus and through His blood, think it humility to say, "Lord have mercy upon US *miserable sinners*!"

What relief it gives the heart to turn from these doctrines of men to the pure word of God. To the newly converted ones at Colosse, the Spirit, by an apostle, wrote, exhorting them to be

Giving thanks unto the Father, *who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*; who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" etc. (Col. 1:12-14).

It may be said, Is not a child of God also a sinner? No doubt a child of God is capable of sinning, and, as a matter of fact, children of God do sin, but they are tenderly enjoined not to sin; and if they are told "to sin not," how can they be characteristically spoken of as "*sinners*?" When Paul spoke of sinners, and said "of whom I am chief," no doubt it was exceptionally true of him, and that there never was such a sinner; but the next words clearly prove that he thus spoke of himself as before his conversion. But are the epistles addressed to sinners or to saints? Look at John's first epistle. Is he not most careful to tell us that he writes to "little children," "young men," and "fathers" in the faith? Even babes in Christ know the Father, that is, know that they are children of God, and have their sins forgiven (1 John 2:12-14). Did he call them sinners, or miserable sinners? Nay, he lovingly said, "My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not." But knowing the possibility of even a child of God sinning, and thus losing his communion with the Father, he graciously adds, that "if any man [any child of God] sin, WE [observe *we*] have an advocate with *the Father*, Jesus Christ the righteous." Thus the spotless righteous Man in the glory, who had been the propitiation on the cross for the very sin we have done, and is before God in all the virtue of that work, takes up our case as our "advocate [and observe it is] with *the Father*"; because it is a question of a child having dishonored *the Father*, and thus of his COMMUNION with the Father being interrupted. Through His advocacy the Holy Spirit works in us, makes us conscious of our having sinned, produces self judgment in us, so that "we confess our sins," know we have our Father's forgiveness, and communion is restored (see 1John 1:8-10; 2:1, 2). Now, is this a

sinner in his sins? Certainly not; but a child of God who has sinned, and the divine way in which his communion with *the Father* is restored when he has lost it.

Until a sinner approaches God by the one sacrifice of Christ for salvation, he is looked at in Scripture as in his sins, far from God, and condemned already. He is away from God. But so simple, and yet so blessed, is God's way of present peace and eternal salvation, that He assures us that the sinner in his guilt and ruin that comes to Him by the *one offering of the body of Jesus Christ*, is entitled to know that he has remission of sins, a purged conscience, is sanctified by the blood, and perfected forever by that one offering; that he has received also the Holy Spirit, has liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, and will be saved to the uttermost, or right on to the end (see Heb. 10:2, 20; 7:25). If I receive these precious testimonies of divine truth as to my present blessing, how can I say that I am a miserable sinner, though I may, however, truthfully say I am a weak, erring, and sometimes sinning child of God?

We would add another word. No one hates sin like a child of God; and only those who are born of the Spirit know that they have two natures. But the child of God having an evil nature -- "the flesh" -- in him, need not hinder his communion with the Father, because God assures us that He has set it aside in judgment with Christ in the death of the cross -- "*Our old man is crucified with him*" -- and has given us life in Christ. Thus the believer is spoken of in the epistles now "in Christ Jesus," "accepted in the Beloved," "complete in Him," and the like. How can I be enjoying these truths by believing them, and say "I'm a miserable sinner?" The truth is, that the child of God knows that *if he should sin*, distressing as the thought is, he need not be desponding; for He who was our sin-bearer on the cross is now our Advocate with the Father. He was a Savior for sinners on the cross; He a Savior for God's children while He sits on the Father's throne, before He comes to take us to sit with Him on His throne.

Plain Words *on* *Peace and Deliverance*

Peace: What Is It?

Scripture speaks of the Son of God as “having made peace through the blood of His cross.” Peace, then, has been made, and the One who did it “has been raised from among the dead, and glorified in consequence.

Founded on this great work is “peace with God,” of which we read in Rom. 5:1. We understand by this “peace with God” the removal forever of everything which could make the believer uneasy in His holy presence, because He justifies us from all things through our Lord Jesus Christ, and reckons us righteous on the principle of faith without works. What love! Peace with God, then, we repeat it, is founded on the blood of the cross, therefore, when Jesus was risen from among the dead, He said to His disciples, “Peace be unto you”; and “He showed unto them His hands and His side.” He “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,” therefore we who believe have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace with God is now known -- we *have it*, but only in believing God’s testimony concerning Christ’s finished work. It is to God {that} the Holy Spirit brings us. We have “joy and peace in believing,” not in feelings, or experience, or ordinances, or religious works of any kind, but in *believing*. About this we cannot be too simple, for, as the apostle says, “It is of *faith*, that it might be by *grace*; to the end the promise might be *sure*.” There is no other ground of assurance in Scripture as to our eternal salvation than God’s testimony to the abiding efficacy of the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Will the reader turn to Rom. 4:3, 5, 18-25; 5:1; 15:13; Heb. 10:9-22, and believe what God says?

But some may say,

WHO ARE BELIEVERS?

When you speak of believers, what do you mean? What is a believer according to Scripture? The question is of all importance; for we read of the believer having everlasting life, of his being justified from all things, and having joy and peace in believing, so it surely is a matter about which we should have divine certainty.

There are not a few who try to persuade themselves that they are believers, because, as they say, they believe the whole Bible, by which they mean they believe it to be a true book. But where has God said He will save a sinner because he assents to the Bible being true? There are others who say they are believers because of what they have *felt*, while many more take the place of believers because they believe they are believers. But where, we ask, does God say that a man shall be saved if he *feels* this or that, or because he believes he is a believer? There are also many sincere souls who are looking at the work of the Spirit *in* them, instead of the work of Christ *for* them; and if they can trace what they suppose to be the Spirit’s work *in* them they conclude they must be

believers. But perhaps the commonest deception in our day consists in persons taking the place of believers because they believe some things *about* Christ, instead of believing *on* the Son to the saving of the soul.

Now these and similar wanderings of the human mind do not agree with what Scripture teaches about believing. Such ideas (alas! how common) not only damage souls, but bewilder those who desire to be right with God. They give shelter to empty professors, and hold fast in carnal security those who care only for the present, and are not exercised before God about their eternal future.

In turning to such Scriptures as set forth the grace of God, we find the Lord Jesus Christ presented as the object of faith, while the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever, is given as the sole authority for faith. The believing soul receive God’s testimony, and knows it to be the truth. “He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal, that God is true” (John 3:33). He is certain that God means what He says, that His word is forever settled in heaven, and will never pass away, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Nothing can be more simple or profoundly grand, for all the glory is thus secured to God, and the blessing to us; and assuredly so, because it is given, not on the principle of law, but on the principle of faith, and flows from the loving heart of the God of all grace through the sacrifice of His own Son.

As to the Lord Jesus Christ being *the object of faith*, the gospels and epistles abound with instruction and examples. Jesus Himself said,

This is the Father’s will which hath sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and *believeth on Him*, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:40).

Observe, it is not believing something *about* Jesus, but believing *on* Him -- making the Son of God the object, the blessed Person to whom our hearts look, and His precious blood our only way of approach to God. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6). Did not our Lord explain to Nicodemus, by the illustration of the brazen serpent, that He, when “lifted up,” would be the only object of saving faith?

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, *even so* must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever *believeth in Him* should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14, 15).

Thus, as the Israelite who was dying from the serpent’s bite looked to the object presented to him and “lived,” so the sinner now who looks away from himself to the Lord Jesus Christ has eternal life; for “He that believeth on the Son *hath* eternal life” (John 3:36). It is not said, if you try, or if you feel, or if you turn over a new

leaf, or if you reform and strive to get better first; no, nothing of the kind; but “whosoever believeth in Him”; or whoever puts his heart’s trust in Him, knowing that He died for sinners, that He bids us come, and would have us drop into His open arms that He might have the joy of saving us. Oh yes, He delights to save every sinner that thus looks to Him. His word is, “Look unto Me, and be ye saved.”

“He makes no hard condition,
Tis only, Look and live.”

But perhaps the reader will say, “I look only to the Lord Jesus as a sinner to a Savior, and approach God only by His precious blood, and yet I cannot say I am sure that I am saved.” Now why is this? Is it not because you do not make the written word of God your sole authority as to salvation? It may be you are trying to determine by your own thoughts and feelings whether or not your sins are forgiven. You reason about it and say, Could a true believer have such thoughts and feelings as I have? Should I not be happier than I am if I were truly a believer? Such reasonings however are not of faith but are the activities of unbelief, and should be treated as false and delusive. The whole question is, *What does God say in His Word of one who truly looks away from himself to the Lord Jesus Christ as a sinner to a Savior?* Does He say such an one will perish? Nay; He declares they “shall never perish.” Does God say that the sinner must do good works *before* he can be justified? Certainly not. Quite the contrary. He declares he is justified on the principle of faith without the deeds of the law; that he is saved by grace without religious works of any kind. And further, as he looked out of himself to Christ, and received eternal life, so now he knows that he has it on God’s testimony in His Word. “These things *have I written* unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that *ye may know* that ye have eternal life” (1John 5:13). When he hearkens only to God’s testimony, he will say, like another --

“I dare not work my soul to save,
That work my Lord has done;
But I will work like any slave
From love to God’s dear Son.”

Again. Perhaps the soul is perturbed as to whether he has the right kind of faith. But Scripture speaks of the faith of God’s people as that which worketh by love. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” This love, when believed -- not merely known, but “known and believed” -- causes confidence to spring up in our hearts; so that we love God who has so loved us, and we trust Him, and take Him, according to the word of His grace, as “a just God and Savior.” The point, then, of all importance is not the quality and measure of our faith, but whether we are looking to the right *person*. Is the Lord Jesus Christ the One we trust in as having saved us by His work of eternal redemption? If so, God declares that “by Him all that believe are justified from all things” justified by His blood, justified on the principle of faith, and have life eternal in Him. Yes, it is God that justifieth; “for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified”; and says, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” All this, and much more, we know on the authority of God’s unerring word.

Every one who believes on the only-begotten Son of God is then entitled to say, “He loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*; all *my* sins are forgiven; *I* am cleansed from all sin, and *I* am before God whiter than snow; *I* have passed from death unto life, shall

not come into judgment; *I* know that *I* have eternal life, and am a child of God.” Sure he is now that if death takes place he will at once be present with the Lord; or should the Lord come, he would be caught up to meet Him in the air. He knows, too, that every step of his earthly pilgrimage God has provided for in the present offices of Christ in heaven on his behalf.” He is able also to save them to the uttermost” (or for evermore) “that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25). Let the reader, if not quite sure of eternal salvation, ponder and mix faith with such Scriptures as are here referred to, and give glory to God: Gal. 1:4, 2:20, 3:26 Acts 10:43; 1 John 2:12; Rev. 1:5; 1 John 5:13; John 5:24; 1 John 3:1, 2, 14; 2 Cor. 5:1; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 1 John 2:1, 2. When these words are believed to be God’s truth, and to have been written for *our* present comfort and hope, how can there be either question or fear left? As we sometimes sing --

“Our doubts and fears for ever gone,
For Christ is on the Father’s throne.”

We may be certain that God will be as good as His word, and that the Spirit leads us to rely upon it, for He is faithful that promised. “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?” How then can He possibly act contrary to His own word, or deny the eternal value of the work of His own Son?

It is generally the sinner’s guilt and burden of his sins which compel him to take refuge in the Savior’s open arms. Thankful indeed, and often joyous too, is he when he finds, through the atoning sacrifice of God’s Son, that his sins are for ever blotted out, that God is the Justifier and has justified him from all things, given him eternal life, and made him His child for ever. His burden is gone, and he is a happy soul. He delights now in prayer and praise, and in knowing and serving the Lord. He loves the brethren. He finds increasing interest in the written Word, and his heart goes out in ways which are according to the truth. He knows he is an object of divine grace, and flatters himself that he will never be unhappy again. But he knows little of the state of the world as it is in God’s sight, or of Satan, who goeth about like a roaring lion, or of the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of his heart. If, however, he tarry on earth, he will learn in some measure, by the Spirit’s teaching, according to the truth of God, what he really is after the flesh, as well as the character of his surroundings. He will find out, to his inexpressible joy, that peace with God is never founded on experience, but on Christ’s finished work.

Peace Founded on Christ’s Finished Work

Peace, then, through the exceeding riches of divine grace, is founded upon a work done for us, a redemption which is accomplished, and made sure to the heart and conscience of the believer on the Lord Jesus Christ by the word of God, brought home to him by the Holy Spirit’s power. Both the work and the Word are unchanging and eternal in their efficacy; so that amidst all the tossings and temptations to which a child of God is exposed, his peace rests on that which changeth not. Moreover it is his sweet privilege to turn to the unchangeably loving heart of God his

Father, and to His testimony to the infinite value of the work of His own Son, who has “made peace through the blood of His cross,” and has assured us that “Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4).

Standing and Experience

But while the ground of the believer’s peace with God is unchangeable, it is evident that those who are born of God will have a very different *experience* from what they could possibly have known before. And it is just here that soul-trouble often comes in; not so much from outward circumstances (though there may be that too), but from what they *now discover in themselves*. This so occupies their minds, that until they know that *deliverance* has been wrought for them in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as *peace* made, they cannot cease from self-occupation. They recognize that there is working *within* them that which they know to be totally opposed to the holiness of God. Moreover, they resolve and make efforts to overcome this bad self; but, learning their helplessness either to improve self or to overcome self, they are obliged at last to give it up, and cry out for a Deliverer. All this is experience; and let it be again noticed that these humbling and painful lessons as to what we are “in the flesh” and “under law” are turned to good account, so that we may enjoy the deliverance which God in infinite grace has entitled us to have. And this deliverance is through the redemption work of His own Son, by which we are set in a totally new place before Him in Christ in cloudless and changeless favour. If it be a question of peace with God, it is “through our Lord Jesus Christ.” If it be how we have deliverance from sinful self and the law, it is “through Jesus Christ our Lord,” with a new life in the Spirit in Him risen, so that henceforth we are “not in the flesh,” but “in Christ Jesus.”

Before looking into the teaching of Scripture as to our deliverance, from “the law of sin and death,” it is important that we should distinguish the Christian’s *standing* from his own *experience*. Our *peace* and also our *standing* in Christ are wholly of God, and we have the comfort of both on simply believing God’s testimony concerning His own Son. This calls out our hearts in praise and worship. When we have not the realized blessedness of these things, it is because we are taken up with *our own thoughts*, and have let go God’s *word* about peace and standing; for we have “joy and peace in believing.”

But *experience* is another thing. Here self, reasonings, unbelieving thoughts, and even Satan may come in, and this is why a soul who is unduly taken up with *experience* is never a bright and joyous Christian. Some one said, “I have never known a person reason himself into peace with God; but I have known many who have reasoned themselves out of it; The truth is that the experience of every Christian is sometimes bright and sometimes dark. We often change, but God changeth not. His word is forever settled in heaven; and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. Look at Paul; as to his peace and *standing* it was wholly of God, and through Christ and in Christ; but as to *experience*, he was at one time in unspeakable delight in the third heavens, and shortly after buffeted by a messenger of Satan on earth in indescribable humiliation and distress. But though his *experience* so changed, his *standing* and *true ground* of peace were entirely unaltered. Was he more in Christ when in the third

heavens than when under such an attack of Satan on earth? Was Paul less secure in Christ when humbled and tempted by Satan’s messenger than when in the third heavens? Certainly not. Let us not fail then to hold with strong confidence that which nothing can shake or alter -- the ground of our peace and standing in Christ Jesus; for it is wholly of God. Our experience may be joyous one day or hour, and very distressing the next. Children of God therefore are not called to live upon their experience (happy, indeed, as it sometimes is, and when otherwise, often turned to profit), but to live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us. Happy those who can say --

“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus Christ, God’s righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand,
All other ground is sinking sand.”

Deliverance: What Is It?

Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:24).

Deliverance is a very different thing from overcoming. The truth is, believers need a Deliverer because they cannot overcome “sin in the flesh,” but practically find that it overcomes them. We do overcome the world by our faith, and also much activity of evil doctrine and practice around us, but not “sin in the flesh.” Even those who know deliverance are not told to overcome “sin in the flesh,” nor to crucify it, but by the Spirit to “mortify *the deeds* of the body,” and not let sin come out; to reckon themselves to have died with Christ. In fact, no one is on the Scripture ground of deliverance so long as he is trying to master the “old man”; for this shows he is not reckoning himself “dead with Christ” as leaving thus been crucified with Him. We surely do not contend with any one we reckon and hold to be dead. Hence the Holy Spirit not only says to believers, “Ye are dead” (or have died) “*with Christ*,” but He also says, “Likewise *reckon* ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:6-11).

DEAD TO SIN

Many who are painfully sensible of the inward workings of “sin in the flesh” are in bondage and distress, fighting against it, and praying and longing to overcome it. A believer once said to the writer, “I prayed a hundred times a day, Lord, help me to overcome this and overcome that, and got no relief,” because he did not know or receive what Scripture teaches as to this. However, as such find out the incurable badness of the flesh, and are so often brought into captivity to this law of sin which is in their members, they thus learn their own helplessness, and find the need of a Deliverer. Then they cry, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Such then learn that God has wrought this deliverance for them. Blessed be His name!

But a common and more serious mistake is the supposition that “the flesh” is capable of being made better. Those who think so have not received the divine verdict, that “they that are in the flesh cannot please God,” or that “the carnal mind is” (not at, but is) “enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can be*” (Rom. 8:7, 8). Such is the divine

testimony; and the oldest and most devoted believers know that "sin in the flesh," unchanged in its moral qualities, is still in them, and gets no better. It is "only evil," and that continually, and, when active, it is in continual and unchanged opposition to God. Its activity is stirred too by God's commandment, so that the exercised yet undelivered soul, vainly trying to overcome it, finds it too strong for him, and has painfully to say, "When I would do good, evil is present with me." More and more he becomes self-occupied, becomes increasingly distressed at being led into captivity to the thing he hates, and is really a wretched man (Rom. 7:8, 9, 13).

Perhaps among the most serious blunders of the day are the statements that "sin is rooted out," "extirpated," and that there is "entire sanctification through faith." Such notions are opposed to every principle of the gospel, and set aside the truth as to the believer's new position or standing in the full favor of God. That every child of God has "sin" in him -- that sinful nature which is born of the flesh and is flesh -- there can be no doubt, as he often painfully proves. To imagine that being born again is the changing of a bad nature into a good one is entirely contrary to the truth; for our Lord Himself, when speaking of the new birth, says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh: and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6). Moreover, the aged apostle John, when inspired to write to babes, young men, and fathers. in Christ, says, "If *we* say that we have no sin" (observe, not sins, but "sin" -- that evil thing "sin in the flesh") "*we* deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). Can any statement be more solemn as to the unsoundness of the doctrine of the sinlessness of the flesh? First, those who hold it are self-deceived; secondly, the truth is not in them. How this admonishes us to be subject to God's word, subject to God's Son, and subject to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, if we would please the Father as His dear children whom He loves as He loves His Son!

The delivered soul has been set free; but not by "sin" being "rooted out" of him, or "extirpated," or there being "entire sanctification through faith," expressions not known in Scripture, or by being "made better," or by "overcoming" it; but by knowing, on the authority of the word of God, that he is cleared from it, by its having been judged in the sacrifice of God's own Son, Our Substitute. "For what the law could, not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" (or by a sacrifice for sin)," condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). We therefore are no longer looked at by God as in the flesh, but as "in Christ Jesus," "alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord." On this account the consciousness of sin dwelling in us is now no excuse for sinning, and no bar to communion with the Father, because we know God has judged it, and bids us so to reckon; and it is no hindrance to our saying, "Come, Lord Jesus!" for He is our life and righteousness. Moreover, we filed our springs of joy and strength, and all our resources, in the risen and ascended Son, who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

The doctrine advanced of late years, that dead with Christ means that our old man is *actually* dead, and therefore incapable of stirring, is so totally opposed to both Scripture and experience, that it seems unaccountable that any child of God can listen to it for a moment. The passage we have already quoted from. 1 John 1:8 is directly to the point, and most decisive; and the sixth of Romans and other Scriptures are equally so.

That all believers on the Son of God for salvation are entitled to know from the word of God that their "old man" has been crucified with Christ is unquestionably true, but it is "with Christ," so that we are not actually dead (though we *were actually* dead in sins, which is another line of truth), but we are *substitutionally* and *judicially* dead with Christ. But we are *actually* alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord, hence we are spoken of in Scripture as in a totally new position, not in the flesh, but "in Christ Jesus." But as to *fact*, the flesh is in us, and ready to act through the members of our body if its "lusts" are yielded to. Therefore those who have died with Christ are told not to "obey it" (observe, it is sin, not Satan, here), "in the lusts thereof." We are not to yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto *sin*, but to yield ourselves unto God as those *who are alive from the dead*. (See Rom. 6:11, 12, 13, 16.) Is it not evident there would be no sense in such language, if those who are alive to God in Christ had not sin dwelling in them?

But further; that there might be no mistake as to this solemn matter, when the apostle Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live," he is most careful by the Spirit to add, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"; that is, the life he now actually has is not an improvement or alteration of the first "I," for that, being too bad to be made fit for God, could only be judicially put out of His sight by the crucifixion of Christ. "I am" (that which is born of the flesh), "crucified with Christ" -- substitutionally and judicially set aside, yet have I *actually* a new life which is totally distinct from the first "I," for it is "Christ liveth in me."

Those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit have therefore to find, all through their earthly pilgrimage, that "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other." (See Gal. 2:20, 5:17.) The doctrine then that "sin" is not in the true believer, or that it is "extirpated," or "actually dead" and incapable of stirring; is very contrary to the truth.

Many dear souls are in cloudiness and uncertainty, because they have not received from Scripture-teaching God's mind as to these things. They may have been quite sure as to the forgiveness of sins, but finding evil desires, pride, self-will, and other workings *within*, which they hate, and know to be contrary to the holiness of God they become full of fear (no doubt aided by Satan) that, after all, they are deceiving themselves, and do not belong to the Lord. They are terrified at what they discover *in themselves*, and thus become self-occupied, miserable, and sometimes despair of ever being happy again. The only bit of comfort some have is in finding that others are as miserable as themselves.

That such experiences are often turned to great profit there can be no question, but such persons, though truly converted, have not yet known *deliverance*; they are occupied with themselves instead of with Christ, where He now is. How can they know their need of a Deliverer unless they have found out that sin in the flesh is too strong for them? Besides, as long as we think we can overcome and deliver ourselves, how can we truly look for a Deliverer?

God will have us learn experimentally that "the flesh profiteth nothing," and that "in me" (that is, in my flesh) "dwelleth no good thing." It is a corrupt tree, and cannot bring forth good fruit; and our finding it to be so is very humbling. Old theologians might speak of it as "the plague of our own heart," and as a necessary kind of law-work before liberty is enjoyed, which is generally,

perhaps, but not always, the case. But sooner or later most have to learn that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and so unsubject to God, so opposed to His will, that self-occupied and undelivered souls are brought into captivity to the law of ill which is in their members. Such cry out for a Deliverer, and to their great relief find God delivers them and sets them free by the death of the cross, and, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, has given them *power* against the perverse will and activity of sin ill the flesh. They are now set free from “the law of sin and death.” They have consciously a *new standing*, not in the first Adam, but in Christ Jesus; a *new state of soul*, for instead of bondage and fear as to the law of sin, they enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free; a *new experience*, for, knowing they are objects of God’s perfect love and cloudless favor, in and through Christ Jesus, their hearts respond in love to God, and manifesting love to those around. They have also *new relationships*; for they know they are children of God, members of the body of Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, who shall also quicken their mortal bodies. They have a new Master, and their great concern is to please Him. Is it any marvel then that such give God thanks? No doubt all through our pilgrimage we learn more thoroughly the good-for-nothingness of ourselves, and the divine grace and divine power that has thus given us deliverance; and though the more spiritually-minded we are the deeper may be the consciousness of sin in us, yet, knowing God has condemned it and judicially set it aside for us forever in the death of His Son, faith finds its presence no bar to communion with the Father, and can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Thus we go forward, and, knowing we have two natures, we have to say, “So then with the mind I Myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.” Looking off unto Jesus the Lord, as alive to God in Him, the delivered soul Call sing

“Nothing but Christ, as on we tread,
The gift unpriced -- God’s living bread;
With staff in hand, and feet well shod,
Nothing but Christ -- the Christ of God.”

“Everything loss for Him below,
Taking the cross where’er we go;
Showing to all where once He trod,
Nothing but Christ -- the Christ of God,

“Nothing save Him in all our ways
Giving the theme for ceaseless praise;
OUR WHOLE RESOURCE along the road,
Nothing but Christ -- the Christ of God.”

Let us now look a little more particularly at what Scripture further teaches as to this in connection with the law.

DEAD TO THE LAW

God is spoken of in the Scriptures as the *Justifier* of the ungodly who believe, the *Reconciler* of His enemies, and the *Deliverer* from the law of sin and death; and all founded on the death of the cross. We are *justified* by the blood of Christ, “*reconciled* to God by the death of His Son,” and *delivered* “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” All too on the principle of faith, and not by the deeds of the law.

The law instead of justifying condemns; instead of reconciling gives the knowledge of sin; (and instead of delivering brings in all who are under it guilty and under the curse. Yet the law is “holy,” because instead of excusing sin it exposes sin; the law is “just,” because it judges even the motions of sin as well as sins committed; and the law is “good,” if a man use it lawfully. The

law also hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth, but has nothing to say to a dead man.

Our sins are *forgiven* on the ground of Christ’s having “died for our sins”; but we are *delivered* from the distress and power of that evil principle in us “sin in the flesh,” by death; for Christ having died, not merely for our sins, but “*unto sin* ⁴ once,” we have died with Him, and are alive unto God *in Him* who is alive again, and that forevermore. We are thus “dead to sin” and “dead to the law by the body of Christ,” that we might be to Another, who has been raised from among the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God; to whom be everlasting praise for such marvelous deliverance.

The doctrine of the believer, who knows the law, ⁵ being dead to the law, and of his being now to Another who has been raised up from among the dead as the only source of fruit-bearing, is set forth in the first six verses of Rom. 7. Then follows a supposed case, in which is described the experience of a quickened soul under law trying to obey, struggling to answer to God’s just claims, and at length, finding himself powerless, cries out for a deliverer -- “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” This deliverance is set forth by one who has been delivered. Practical righteousness follows the consciousness of deliverance.

It is clear that the person supposed in Rom. 7 to be speaking and crying out in distress of soul for deliverance is quickened -- this is, has life -- for

1. He knows that “the law is spiritual”; that is, that it is not merely applicable to outward conduct, but to the inward feelings and desires, and that he is fleshly, sold under sin -- the slave of sin.

2. He owns that “the law” is “good,” and he resolves to be good, and to do good, but finds that he cannot.

3. He delights in “the law of God,” after the inward man, and allows that the commandment is holy, and just, and good. His *understanding* is enlightened, so that he consents to the law that it is good; his *will* is changed, for to will is present with him for good; and he has a *heart* now that can love according to God, for he *delights* in the law of God after the inward man. These things show that he is born of God; but the context shows also that he is not occupied with Christ, but with self, for it is “I” and “me” all through He learns, too, his powerlessness against “sin in the flesh.” Hence his wretchedness; and the more conscientious the more wretched such must be. But this experience is turned to much blessing through finding out the incurably bad and insubject

4. Observe it is “sin” not sins. Sin is mentioned seventeen times in Rom. 6, where the subject is “dead to sin,” and fourteen times in the seventh chapter, where the subject is “dead to the law.”

5. It is not necessary that Gentiles should have to do with the law; they can enter at once by faith in the Lord Jesus into the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. But, as a matter of fact, though the law was given to the children of Israel as a people in relationship to God, yet many Gentile professing Christians have put themselves under it, and are in conscience struggling with a yoke which they cannot bear. Such only get free by receiving the truth that “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3). They are set free by death, knowing that they have “died with Christ.”

state of that which is born of the flesh, and then looking away from self to God, and what He has done for us in the death of His Son.

Though the one brought before us in this passage has life, he is not delivered till the end of the chapter, but goes on struggling with the law, because he has not given himself up as thoroughly bad and powerless, through which exercises he learns experimentally

1. That in him -- that is, in his flesh -- *no good dwells*.
2. That sin *dwells in him*. He finds he has a nature which is opposed to God, and that its opposition is provoked by God's holy commandment. This is a terrible discovery for a tender conscience; for with all his resolves, all his good desires and struggling he is conscious of the appalling fact that sin dwells in him -- that corrupt tree which only brings forth evil fruit; an active principle of evil ever opposed to God, and always ready to war against the law of his mind. Such is "sin in the flesh."
3. That he has *no power* to perform the good he would, so that he is brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. With all his good desires and efforts he finds himself unable to overcome indwelling evil, and to work righteousness by law-keeping. He is now consciously "without strength," and has *no* resources in himself. He looks for good in his flesh, and finds none. He would have no evil within; but finds evil thoughts, lust, pride, self-will, continually rising up, even if nothing come out. Though he seeks to do good, evil is present with him. He tries to have a better experience of himself, to answer to God's just claims, and finds he has *no power*; so that if he be delivered at all, it must be by another, for he has the sentence of death in himself.

These are profitable lessons, but often learnt through deep distress and humiliation. When a soul has to do with an infinitely holy God, and finds out so painfully that his Adam nature is incurably bad, with *no good* in that thus sin *dwells in him*, and is his master, so that he has *no power* over it, can he be otherwise than truly "wretched"? Hence his cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

And how does he get deliverance? By efforts? No. By religious duties? No. By bodily inflictions, sacrifices, and self-denial? No. Not even by earnest prayer; but by simply looking out of self straight to God, and believing His testimony concerning Christ's work on the cross. *Then* he finds that God, who knew how bad and helpless he was, has gone before him, and wrought for him, by the death of His Son, the very deliverance he longs for; and, *believing God's word as to this*, he is delivered, so that he gives God thanks -- "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Observe, his distress was not about the things he had done, but about what he was. He might have long known the forgiveness of his sins; but it was not forgiveness he now sought, but deliverance from the distress and power of an evil nature, which he had proved in his experience to be too strong for him, and only evil, and that continually; in-subject to God, and incurably bad. As the law could not make it better, and as, as it has been often said, offences can be forgiven, but an evil nature can only be dealt with judicially; therefore we are told, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin,

condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). This is not "sins," but our evil nature, "sin in the flesh." Thus divine grace in the way of righteous judgment has set us free by death with Christ, and by a new life in Christ risen. When this is known and believed, we can praise and thank God. We have now soul-deliverance, and wait for the deliverance of the body; for "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

God's purpose is, that we shall be conformed to the image of His Son." We are set free from the law of sin and death, our old man having been crucified with Christ; so that we are dead to sin, dead to the law, dead too as to the world, dead with Christ, and thus judicially set aside by God Himself as to any standing in the flesh, and brought into another standing; so that God can now say to us, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." What a deliverance! What freedom! The flesh in us, but we not in the flesh; so that we are to think of ourselves not as in Adam, but as in Christ Jesus; to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. What a gracious deliverance, founded on righteousness too, because that evil thing has been condemned and judicially set aside for ever when God condemned sin in the flesh in our spotless Substitute, His own Son.⁶

From the time the believer knows deliverance he has a new *experience*. Is he not, then, sensible that sin dwells in him? Most certainly, and he may be more so than ever. He has learnt also that neither experience nor self-occupation in any form can give peace, but that faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ always does. He is delivered from himself, "so that as long as the truth engages his heart he dare not give way to self occupation, but he knows that in a Glorified and triumphant Savior all his blessings are forever settled. He lives by the faith of the Son of God who loved him and have Himself for him, and goes on in service to Him, knowing that he has two natures one that is of God, "and the mind which serves the law of God"; and the other, "the flesh which serves the law of sin."

THE EXPERIENCE OF A DELIVERED SOUL

As to the *experience of a delivered soul*, then, we may observe that

1. *His eye is off self and the law*, looks to God in Christ, and becomes occupied with what divine grace has accomplished for him in the death of the cross. He knows (not feels, not hopes for, but on the authority of God's truth he *knows*) that his old man⁷ has been crucified with Christ, and that he has thus died to sin and to the law by the body of Christ, and is now alive to God in Him who is risen from the dead. Before he knew deliverance, it was

6. Let us not fail to observe that the believer does not overcome, but obtains deliverance by Another from the distress and power of that unchangeably evil and corrupt nature "sin in the flesh." What he was so hopelessly struggling against, he finds he is now delivered from by judgment, in having been crucified with Christ; and though sin in the flesh is still actually in him, and he knows it, yet he treats it as judged and dead, and has nothing to say to it, and has no confidence in it, but looking up to God in Christ he says, "All my springs are in Thee."

7. {"The old man" and "the new man" are generic terms. Our standing in "the old man," i.e., Adam fallen, is ended. Our standing is in Christ, i.e., in "the new man." Practically, one is to be put off and the other put on.}

self-occupation -- "I" and "me"; but now he is before God thanking Him for the deliverance wrought for him through our Lord Jesus Christ. The enjoyment of *this new standing* in Christ is connected with an amazing change in the state of his soul.

2. *He is, now occupied with God's thoughts from God's word, instead of his own feelings and thoughts about himself.* He knows that he has two natures of very opposite qualities -- "that which is born of the flesh" and "that which is born of the Spirit"; the former he knows God has judiciously set aside by the cross; the latter he knows is that in which God now always views him. He is aware, too, that both these natures are unchanging in their moral qualities for "that which is born of the flesh *is flesh*," and "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Both these natures are in the believer; the one, when it is active, acts out what is "only evil," the other what is for the glory of God. Therefore, in thinking of himself now, he, having believed God, takes sides with God, and recognizing these two natures, he concludes, as we have before noticed, "So then with the mind" (or new nature) "I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh" (or old nature) "the law of sin" (v. 25).

3. *He has power over sin.* By the gift of the Holy Ghost he now knows that he is connected with a triumphant and glorified Savior. He is conscious of being set free, and that SIN is no longer his master; so that looking up he can say, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). All his resources now are in Christ. He draws on Him for all he needs. He lives by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him. If he feels sin in the flesh, which he often will, the workings within of evil thoughts, lust, pride, self-will, and unbelief, he remembers that "God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, *condemned sin in the flesh*" {Rom. 8:3}. It is gone thus for ever to faith under the judgment of God. He is not in the flesh, though he is painfully conscious that the flesh is in him. If he looks within, and learns again and again, as he will all through his sojourn on earth, that in his flesh no good dwells, he looks up again, and knows that his standing now before God *nothing can alter*, for it is not in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus.

Thus having a new life or nature, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, who sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, the two righteous requirements of the law are fulfilled *in* him -- love to God, and love to man; though he is not under the law, but under grace, and his practice is, that he walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4).

How gladly his heart can now sing --

"For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,
And I, have died with Thee.
Thou'rt risen, my bands are all untied,
And now Thou liv'st in me.
The Father's face of radiant grace,
Shines now in light on me."

THE FIVE LAWS OF THE SEVENTH AND EIGHTH OF ROMANS

It may be well to observe that between Rom. 7:5 and 8:2 we have five laws brought before us.

1. "The law" is many times mentioned, and refers to the law which was given by Moses, and is often in the same chapter called "the commandment."

2. "The law of God," or the revealed will of God, which a quickened soul delights in, and with his mind seeks to obey but before deliverance finds himself powerless to carry out (vv. 22, 23, 25).

3. "The law of my mind," or the resolve and purpose of a quickened soul to obey God, against which he found another principle working within him. (v. 23)

4. "The law of sin and death" the principle of antagonism and enmity of the natural man to God, of insubjection to His law or will. As another has said, "That deadly principle which ruled in us before as alive in the flesh."

5. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," the principle and power of that new life which is given us in Christ by the Holy Spirit, who now dwells in us. We are in Christ Jesus, and Christ is in us; and we know it by the Spirit which is given unto us, and "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

IN WHAT SENSE ARE DELIVERED SOULS SET FREE?

Delivered souls are set free --

1. As to *sin in us*, by having died to sin, having been crucified with Christ, when God in richest grace to such "condemned sin in the flesh." We know we have thus died with Christ.

2. As to *position*, we have a perfect and unalterable *standing*. We are "not in the flesh," but "in Christ Jesus."

3. As to *the law*, as having died with Christ to it, we are not under it.

4. As to *state*, Christ liveth in us. Christ is our life. The Holy Spirit has been given to us; so that we are so set free from the law of sin and death that we worship the Father in the sweet consciousness of being His children, and have no confidence in the flesh.

5. As to *practice*, we "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4).

6. We have a new Master, and are become servants to God.

7. As to *relationship*, we are children of God, and members of the body of Christ; relationships which can never change.

What a deliverance! What praise and worship the sense of it produces in our hearts! What unceasing thanksgiving to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ it calls forth! What gratitude is manifested in the few words of the delivered one, "I thank God through Jesus Christ!"

Is the reader in the enjoyment of this wondrous deliverance? While you may be often painfully conscious that sin is in you, do you in faith "reckon yourself indeed dead unto it, and therefore have nothing to say to it, but go forward knowing that in God's sight you are in Christ, and not in the flesh? If so, you will go on, in the power of the Holy Ghost, worshiping the Father, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, bearing fruit unto holiness, and waiting for His return from heaven. Surely we can say to the self-occupied, and therefore disconsolate, believer --

"Look off unto Jesus, and sorrow no more."

The *comfort* then of this deliverance we have in believing God's testimony to the work of Christ as dead to sin upon the cross. The *power* for godliness and enjoyment is the Holy Spirit; and we are told that if we are led of the Spirit we are not under the law, and

if we walk in the Spirit we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh (Gal.5:16, 18). Before deliverance it was all “I,” “me,” and “my”; but after deliverance Christ is the object of the heart and the indwelling Spirit the power for holiness, who is the Glorifier and Testifier of the Son. In the consciousness of being God’s children, being in Christ and Christ in us, in a groaning creation yet to be delivered, with a body yet to be conformed to the image of His Son; and often called to resist Satan by being steadfast in the faith, yet, knowing that God is for us, God is our Justifier and our Glorifier, we are entitled to go on waiting for the redemption of our body, being fully persuaded that nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Before the subject of deliverance is brought out in this epistle to the saints at Rome, the Holy Spirit is only once mentioned in the whole of the first seven chapters; but when deliverance is known, the personal actings and operations of the Spirit dwelling in us are over and over again presented to us; and this is important to notice. As to this we may observe

1. That the Holy Spirit gives us life in Christ Jesus, and sets us free; for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2 Cor. 3:18).
2. As a divine Person -- the Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead -- He dwells in us, and shall “quicken your mortal bodies” (v. 11). The Holy Spirit Himself dwells in our bodies. (See 1 Cor. 6:19.)
3. He is our power against all evil and for all fruit-bearing. It is by the Spirit we have power to mortify the deeds of the body. Observe here it does not say “the body,” but “the deeds of the body,” for in this way sin in the flesh comes out (Rom. 8:13).
4. He is in us not as a spirit of bondage, but as “the Spirit of adoption,” to make us know that we are really God’s children. He communicates intelligence, and strengthens affections and motives suited to such an endearing relationship, “whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” He also leads us, “for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14, 15).
5. He is given to us as the “firstfruits of the Spirit,” because by-and-by the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh. (v. 23)
6. He is the Helper of our infirmities in prayer, and makes intercession according to God, “with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26).
7. He shows us that the whole creation groaneth, and will be delivered and brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God; and He teaches us to wait for the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23).

Thus we have brought before us something of *the power* that works in a delivered soul. Ought we not then to “abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost”?

Concluding Remarks

But be it remembered that, though so blessedly delivered as to be walking in the liberty and joy of the Holy Spirit, and waiting for God’s Son from heaven, we can never forget that *the flesh is in us*;

but the flesh is *not us*; for before God we are in Christ, and not in the flesh. Yet we never lose the sense that in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing, or that the two natures are opposed to each other. We find too that our *communion* with the Father is interrupted when we trust the flesh and walk in it, though our *relationship* to the Father never can be altered, for which we adoringly praise and give thanks.

It is also true that the delivered soul *groans* as having a *mortal body*; “for we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened.” In this he groans, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven -- his glorified body. He is often painfully conscious that he has a mortal body liable to disease and death (2 Cor. 5; Rom. 8:11). The delivered soul has also *groanings within*; for being born of God, and having the Holy Spirit, his affections and thoughts are according to Christ, who was the suffering Savior, and is still the rejected One, who is coming, not only for the redemption of our body, but to bring even this groaning creation into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. “Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves *groan within ourselves*, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). The Lord was a Man of sorrows, and knew what it was to groan in Himself. By the Spirit also believers know what it is to have *unutterable groanings* in prayer, for “the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26).

How many groans the Lord Jesus will hush when He comes again! How blessed is the thought that when Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, we shall be manifested with Him in glory! (Col. 3:4). Meanwhile may our hearts be taken up with Him where He now is as our eternal treasure, while we stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has made us free, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Safety, Deliverance, and Possession; or, Egypt, The Red Sea, and Canaan

Safety Through the Blood; Or, Israel in Egypt

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the Lord. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt (Ex. 12:12, 13).

God's sentence of judgment had gone forth. Death was declared against the firstborn throughout all the land of Egypt. His testimony by Moses had been again and again rejected; and now God's hand must smite and cut off. His long-suffering had run its course. He had repeatedly manifested His displeasure, but it had been unheeded. His patience could no longer endure. He said, "All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die . . . and there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt." Thus death was threatened throughout all the land. God declared it should be. This was enough. His word must stand. The result we know.

And so *now* the word of God speaks of coming wrath and judgment. God's message of abounding grace in the gospel has been sounding for a long time in men's ears. Many have rejected it. Few believe the record God has given of His Son; and inevitable judgment is pending. "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness." The solemn verdict has been announced, "Now is the judgment of this world"; and the Executioner is coming. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9). It is certain, then, that the wrath of God is coming, and that it is only a question of time as to its execution. Then surely will be sudden and everlasting destruction, and they shall not escape.

Nor could it be otherwise; for men are not only by nature unclean, but practical transgressors, rebellious, unfit for God's presence. Every trial has only proved their unclean and insubject condition. God tried man first in innocence; then as having a conscience and without law; then under law with many privileges, priesthood, prophets, kings; after this by the personal ministry of His beloved Son; and now by the ministry of divine grace by the Holy Ghost. But all have proved man to be evil and insubject to the will of God. Early in man's course God's testimony was, that

"the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of man are only evil, and that continually"; and still the divine declaration is, that

the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:7, 8).

This is God's verdict, and the sentence is final. Whether men agree with it or not, it is God's righteous estimate of fallen man. And if men in their natural state do not and cannot please God, how can they be fit for His holy presence? The ways of men invariably prove the wilful and insubject state of their hearts; for if God commands, he disobeys; if God loves, man hates. If God sends His Son to bless and save, they hate Him without a cause; they reject Him, saying, "This is the heir; come, let us kill Him, that the inheritance may be ours." If God preaches peace and remission of sins, they will not believe. As, therefore, the judgment of God upon the Egyptians could no longer be withheld because of their hatred of God and His people, and rejection of His word, so the coming wrath is inevitable because of man's enmity, and wilfulness, and continual insubjection to God and His truth.

But let us not fail to notice that before the judgment actually came upon the firstborn in Egypt, God did, in His great love and pity, proclaim by His servant the way of safety. So He does *now* by the gospel, blessed be His name! The people of Israel were told to search for and take a lamb without blemish. This was the first thing. It must be without a spot, in order to be a fit type of Him it was intended to represent, who would hundreds of years after this be found here as the holy, pure, and perfect Lamb of God. Then, observe, this spotless, unoffending lamb must be killed, because nothing could meet our need less than the death of the holy Son of God. Most pure and perfect as His life was, yet had He stopped short of death, whatever other sufferings He had endured, no one could have been saved. It was absolutely, imperatively necessary that Jesus should die; for the wages of sin is death; and, blessed be God, Jesus did die -- He "died for the ungodly." This was His perfection, He "was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." For this, too, He came down from heaven; for He "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." Then, on the cross bearing sins, and forsaken of God because our sins were upon Him, He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. However precious the life of Jesus was -- and most precious it was to God, and is to us -- yet His death, the shedding of His blood, the laying down of His life, became necessary to meet the holy and righteous claims of a just God against sin to deliver us from its guilt and condemnation, in order, too, that "we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

But all this in the antitype God has provided. He has found a Lamb without spot, and according to His own purpose and counsel He has been slain. He died that the might live –

“The Prince of life in death hath lain,
To clear me from all charge of sin;
And, Lord, from guilt of crimson stain
Thy precious blood hath made me clean.”

And it is the death of Jesus that the apostle Paul first calls attention to when speaking of the gospel which he preached -- “I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3).

But true and blessed as it is that Christ has been delivered for our offences, died for our sins, and shed His blood for many, it may now be asked what benefit has it been to us? Many will tell you that they know that Christ died, and shed His blood; but if you press them as to what it has done for *them*, they will perhaps be unable to say. Why is this? Because they only know these points as historical facts, and have never availed themselves of that precious blood for their own soul’s safety. Hence we are further told that the Israelites used the blood. This was their faith. God told them to take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood, and sprinkle the lintel and the two side-posts of their houses with the blood, and then to go inside and rest in perfect peace. This is the vital point in this most beautiful narrative. We should not fail to notice the places where the blood was to be sprinkled -- the lintel and side-posts of the doors. It was to be exalted by them, looked up to as is certainly the case now with all who really value the blood of Christ. We know that mere professors would put it on the threshold, because, with all their boasted profession, they *practically* trample under foot the Son of God, and count His precious blood unsanctifying. The Israelite had to place it as it were between him and God, and to know its protecting power also, both on the right hand and on the left. And what can be more assuring to the true believer now, than knowing that he looks to the blood of Christ as between him and God, and that God looks upon him as under its precious sin-cleansing and justifying safety?

But suppose they had said, “The blood is not enough,” or, “It cannot be expected that they would be sheltered *only* by it,” would it not have betrayed rank unbelief? But they believed God. They availed themselves of the blood. They gratefully took God’s way of shelter. Their safety was in the blood. They sprinkled the lintel and door-posts of their houses, and were safe -- unquestionably, perfectly safe. However sinful, ignorant, and unworthy, yet being underneath the shelter of the blood they were safe. However pious they might have been, their safety was not in their piety, but in the blood. Kind and benevolent acts and self-sacrificing ways, however commendable in their place, did not in the least help their security; for it was only through the blood. For God had said, “The blood shall be *to you for a token* upon the houses where ye are: and when I *see the blood*, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.” Thus their safety was wholly in the blood; it was to be to them “for a token.” And God declared that when He saw the blood He would save all who were under its blessed shelter. How charming and how simple this is! God did not say, when I see your doings, or feelings, or hear your prayers -- no; but “when I see the blood.” No bars or locks, however numerous or powerful, could

have excluded the messenger of God’s judgment; but the blood on the lintel and side-posts was enough. The people might have been young or old, moral or immoral, learned or ignorant, but, having taken refuge beneath the blood-sprinkled lintel, they were perfectly safe. How anxious every believing Israelite must have been to get all his household inside the house marked with the blood! Cannot you imagine some of them asking why they might not go outside the door? and the loving parents saying, “Because God’s terrible judgment is coming, and He has promised safety to those only who are in houses which have been marked with the blood of the lamb.”

Again, you may easily conceive there were some inside the blood-stained door-posts who were the subjects of doubts and fears, and otherwise lacking comfort. Why? Because they forgot that *all* their safety was in the blood. If they were taken up with self, their own doings, feelings, fitness, and the like, they would surely be unhappy; but if their minds and hearts rested on the two things God had given them -- *the blood for a token, and His word for assurance* -- they would find it an effectual remedy for all doubts and fears. Trusting, then, wholly in the blood, and relying only on what God said about it, would be enough to keep them in perfect peace. And so now, God declares that Jesus has *made peace* by the blood of His cross, and He now *proclaims peace* to every one that believeth. And those who do believe, trusting only in the blood of Christ, and relying on what God says, that “whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish,” they *have peace* with God. Oh yes, God’s testimony to the all-cleansing virtue of the blood of Jesus is the remedy for all doubts and fears. That precious blood withers up all fleshly confidence, and silences every accusing of conscience; for it tells of sins judged and cleansed. The blood speaks to us of God’s perfect love, even when we were dead in sins; it tells us of peace made, of redemption accomplished, of a new and living way into the holiest, of title to everlasting glory.

Being sheltered by the blood is the *vital point*. Many stumble here, and the mistake is fatal. They are lost, forever lost, because they reject the blood of Jesus as the only ground of peace and safety; for

“Nothing can for sin atone,
But the blood of Christ alone.”

They say they are sinners, and that Christ is the Savior; but they do not avail themselves of the value of His death. They do not take shelter in His blood as the alone way of safety. This is unbelief. It is refusing to hear Him that speaks from heaven. God has declared that “without the shedding of blood is no remission”; that “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”; that “in Christ we have redemption through His blood”; and that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all sin*.” Therefore it is clear that no sin is too black for that precious blood to wash away. Oh no; “it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”; and happy indeed are those who, taking shelter before God in the blood of Jesus, so rely on His testimony to its perfect efficacy as to be unquestionably assured of perfect safety. Oh the blessedness of God saying to us, Ye are “**NOW JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD!**”

Remember, then, what God said to those who took Him at His word, and relied on the sheltering power of the blood of the

lamb. He told them two things. First, that the blood (mark, not their feelings, nor opinions, nor even prayers, but the blood), and the blood only, was to be the token to them of their perfect safety. Come what might, they were to think of the blood, and be in peace, because they were sheltered by it. "The blood shall be *to you for a token* upon the houses where ye are." This is most blessed. It is the perfect cure for every doubt, or question, or suggestion of the enemy. The divine assurance was of perfect safety, because of the blood. Secondly, God said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." Thus God acted in virtue of the blood. He did not say, when I see your feelings or doings. Oh no; but "when I see the blood, I will pass over you." Thus we see that the blood answers every claim of God, as well as meets every need of our souls. They were not only in their houses perfectly safe, but they were also entitled to know it, and to be in perfect peace about it.

And what then? Did God leave these people thus safe to do their own will, follow their own opinions, and live as they liked? Or did He prescribe occupation for them as thus secure and separated off for Himself by the blood? Most assuredly He did. He set three things before them, all of which have a solemn voice of instruction to us.

First, they were to put away all leaven out of their houses. Now leaven in Scripture will always be found to represent what is evil. They were thus to separate themselves from all evil. They were to hold to nothing that was unsuitable to God. His word is, "Be ye holy; for I am holy." So now, being purchased by the blood of Jesus, we are God's; to be for Him always; to show forth the characteristics of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. We are to depart from iniquity, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all for the glory of God.

Secondly, they were to "eat of the flesh of the lamb roast with fire." This was their happy occupation, and it loudly admonishes us as to the need of communion with Him who "loved us, and gave Himself for us." Nothing can go right with us if communion be neglected. We are called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. They might have remembered the sufferings, death, and bloodshedding of the lamb, they might rejoice in their present safety, but they were to be occupied with and feed on the lamb that had been slain. Particular parts of the lamb were specially noticed as provided for them -- "His head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof" (Ex. 12:9). And we cannot fail to notice in these words of the Holy Ghost, that it is our privilege to have communion with our blessed Lord as to His mind, as we understand "his head" teaches us. Thus should we be not ignorant, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Intelligently entering into His counsels, purposes, and thoughts, as revealed to us in the word and by the Holy Ghost, is one of our highest present privileges. To be able to say, without fear of contradiction, that "we have the mind of Christ," and "know the things that are freely given to us of God," because "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God," was what an apostle was wont unhesitatingly to pronounce as characterizing the saints of

God. Oh the blessedness of thus having communion with the Lord as to His mind and will!

By "his legs" we understand His walk. This also, by the Spirit, through the word, it becomes us to enter into; for He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps -- walk as He walked. And I ask, Can any exercise exceed the blessedness of tracing the steps of the blessed Son of God while here? At one time we see Him in a solitary place, or spending a whole night in prayer; at another preaching early in the temple.

Sometimes we behold Him disputing with doctors, or in controversy with rationalistic Pharisees, or infidel Sadducees. Again, He is found by the side of the lake of Gennesaret or walking Jerusalem's streets, exposed to the temptations of Satan or the hatred of wicked men; He is sitting down in a Pharisee's house to meat, or talking to a crowd of thousands; or sitting alone on Samaria's well with an enquiring sinner, or sailing along the sea of Galilee in a boat. In public or in private, every step was obedience to the Father's will; every word that escaped His holy lips the Father gave Him to say; every act was such a manifestation of the Father that He could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Ah, this was true and perfect; all was fruit in due season; but to enter into it, enjoy it, and gather comfort and strength from the believing contemplation of it, is a privilege indeed!

But they were to feed on the "purtenance" also -- the inward part. And so the affections of Christ are laid open to us in the precious word of God, and the Spirit delights to take of the things of Christ and show unto us. We know that He did love indeed; that whom He loved when He was in the world, He loved them unto the end; that He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; and that it was when we were enemies, ungodly, sinners, that He so loved us as willingly to die for us. We know that His heart is so set upon us that He is always in spirit with us, and will never leave nor forsake us; that the same loving heart, though now beating on the throne of God, is ever and unceasingly occupied in ministering to us and caring for us. And so ardently does He long to have us in the glory with Him, that He has not only promised to come again to receive us unto Himself, that where He is we may be also, but His heart still says, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory" (John 17:24). It is thus entering into the affections of Christ, and enjoying His love, that our hearts are lifted up in adoring worship, and rise superior to all the distressing circumstances which may cross our path. Let us not fail to see, then, that during this present time, before the coming of our Lord, it is our happy privilege to be occupied with the thoughts, the walk, and the love of that Lamb who is now in the midst of the throne as it had been slain.

Thirdly, there is also another point of deep practical importance. They were to eat it in haste; not as those who were settling down in Egypt. On the contrary, they were to be ready to move at the Lord's command. Their position was to be one of entire subjection to the will of God, ready to go at His bidding. We read: "Thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord's passover" (Ex. 12:11). They had to feed on the lamb with girded loins, staff in hand, and shod feet. They were

a distinct and practically separated people from the Egyptians -- consciously the Lord's, and in a position ready for whatever He pleased. True it is there was no singing in Egypt as there was afterwards on the other side of the Red Sea, nor was there fighting as when beyond Jordan; but there was conscious peace, shelter from judgment, separation from evil, feeding on the lamb, and the expectation of leaving Egypt forever and dwelling in the land flowing with milk and honey.

And how is it, dear fellow-Christians, with our souls? Are we peacefully enjoying the shelter of the blood, and resting on the precious assurance of God's unerring word? And in the sweet comfort of this, is Christ everything to our hearts -- our strength, our joy, our never-failing resource? Are we truly realizing that because we are the redeemed of the Lord we are ready to go, to stay, to wait, to serve, to be wholly and unreservedly His? Oh the blessedness of this rest of soul! nay, more, the enjoyment of the thoughts, the love, the ways of Christ Himself! And though all our joys here, however pure and spiritual, are mixed with human elements of bitterness -- bitter herbs -- yet we must find Him to be the spring of joy, the strength of life, the true never-ending source of all that is pure and blissful. Thanks be unto God for "the precious blood of Christ!"

"The perfect righteousness of God
Is witnessed in the Savior's blood;
'Tis in the cross of Christ we trace
His righteousness, yet wondrous grace.

God could not pass the sinner by;
His sin demands that he must die
But in the cross of Christ we see
How God can save, yet righteous be.

The sin is laid on Jesus' head;
'Tis in His blood sin's debt is paid;
Stern justice can demand no more,
And mercy can dispense her store!

The sinner who believes is free,
Can say, 'The Savior died for me';
Can point to the atoning blood,
And say, This made my peace with God."

Deliverance; or, the Red Sea

The Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore (Ex. 14:30).

To be safely sheltered from the judgment of God by the blood of the lamb, was the precious lesson taught by the passover. But many a soul has great distress, and becomes subject to the assaults of the adversary, even after having taken refuge in the blood of Jesus as the only shelter from the wrath to come. To be really trusting in the atoning work of Christ, as the alone foundation of peace and safety, is one thing; to know deliverance from self, and the world, and Satan, is another. Hence many souls have deep conflict, and are longing for deliverance, as they say, from the plague of their own heart, because they do not see how wondrously God has wrought this for them in the work of Jesus on the cross, as their *substitute*. It may be through much soul-conflict and distress that some are brought so entirely to look out of self as to fix the eye of their heart *only* upon the Lord Jesus; but this very

sorrowful experience is usually turned to good account. All who are taught of God must surely be instructed according to the divine word, that "the flesh profiteth nothing," and sooner or later learn in their experience something of the truth, that "no flesh shall glory in His presence, and he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Conscious shelter then from the wrath to come some have, who know not the enjoyment of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. It is this latter subject which this chapter brings before us, and it is of the deepest importance to our souls to learn clearly from Scripture the Lord's own mind concerning this great deliverance. It is most remarkable that the place of the occurrence of this scene should be Pihahiroth, for it means "the entrance into liberty"; and the end of this chapter, and the singing which followed, tells us what a time of unprecedented happiness and rejoicing it was.

They had learned in time of deepest trial the safety afforded them by the blood of the lamb, according to the word of the Lord. He had indeed passed over them. While death, with its attendant miseries, by the messenger of God's judgment, was in every other house, yet in virtue of the blood of the lamb they had been preserved. Thus kept in safety by the blood, and brought out of Egypt by the power of God, under His peculiar guidance, the pillar of cloud over them by day, and pillar of fire by night, it was not till they came to the borders of the Red Sea that their fears and anguish appear to have begun. What immediately gave rise to it was lifting up their eyes and seeing the hosts of Pharaoh, his mighty men with their chariots and horses hotly pursuing them. The waves of the Red Sea rolling before them, and the king of Egypt with his armed soldiers immediately behind them, they found themselves in such circumstances of peril and distress as they never expected, and for which they were totally unprepared. At once their minds became occupied with themselves, their dangers, and their enemies; in fact, their circumstances. Their misery was intense. They wished they had never left Egypt. They murmured against Moses. We read,

When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel *lifted up their eyes*, and, behold, the Egyptians *marched after them*; and *they were sore afraid*: and the children of Israel *cried out unto the Lord*. And they said *unto Moses*, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Ex. 14:10-12).

Such were the expressions of distress and misery which the children of Israel now gave forth, and it reminds us of another utterance of later date, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" Their case seemed to them so hopeless that they contemplated dying in the wilderness, and regretted they had ever left Egypt; they said that they actually preferred the cruel bondage of serving the Egyptians, to their present fear and anguish at the prospect of being wholly exterminated by Pharaoh and his hosts.

But is it possible that these are the same people who only a short time before had personally experienced that they were

objects of divine favor, and before whom went to lead them, the

pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night? Yes, they are the same people; and though they called unto the Lord, when they *lifted up their eyes* and beheld the vast multitude of Egyptian soldiers marching after them, they murmured against Moses, despondently spoke of dying in the wilderness, and wrongly judged themselves worse off than when made to serve the Egyptians with rigor at the brick-kiln. In short, they never were so miserable before. It is a vivid illustration of what many a soul passes through now. The picture is not overdrawn. It is a life-like delineation, for it is drawn by a divine hand, and abounds with most instructive lessons.

The fact is, that what at first usually brings a soul to realize its need of the Savior is the sense of guilt on account of sins committed. The burden of known transgressions, and therefore of deserved judgment, is so intolerable that the distressed heart cries out, "What must I do to be saved?" and is rejoiced to find shelter in the blood of Jesus shed for the remission of sins. The joy is often very great at finding in the cross of Christ that God is both "a just God and a Savior," and hope therefore of eternal salvation lights up the dark scene where before only gloom and despondency had occupied the soul. Like the children of Israel in Egypt, they happily experience the sheltering value of the blood, and flatter themselves with the idea that they will never be unhappy again. So on they move in their Christian career. They tread a new path. They realize, too, that God is with them. Their backs are turned upon this Egypt world, and with their faces toward the promised rest -- "the land flowing with milk and honey" -- they go onward, according to their knowledge of the will and guidance of God, little suspecting what is so soon and so deeply to try them.

A question, as yet unknown to them, must sooner or later exercise their consciences before God. Hitherto it was the transgressions they had knowingly committed against an infinitely holy, sin-hating God, as we have noticed, that had distressed them; and this they knew had all been met for them, and their souls were happy in believing in the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus. But now the question is about the flesh (prefigured by the Egyptians, men of flesh), the nature from which all transgressions spring; or, as Scripture calls it, our "old man."⁸ The fact is, the old nature, that which is born of the flesh, is totally unfit for God's presence or His service; and to learn this experimentally cannot but be very distressing. To accept the doctrine because we see it in Scripture is simple enough; but to work it out in God's sight, that "in me, that is, in *my flesh*, dwelleth no good thing," is very humiliating. This was not in the least suspected by many of us when we first gladly accepted the shelter which the precious blood of the cross gave to our sin-stricken souls. Still, it has to be learned that the nature that did the sins, the old man, is so totally and irremediably bad -- not subject to God, neither indeed can be -- that the only way which God could deal with it was to judge it, and put it thus away out of His sight. The distress connected with this second lesson is often far greater than the distress of the first. Still, it is the way of learning deliverance, and the only way, as I

judge, of entrance into the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

When the soul that has known remission of sins through the blood of Jesus finds *within*, every now and then, an innumerable host of lusts, and pride, and murmurings, and complainings cropping up, and even if they do not *break out*, are ready at any moment to do so, the heart is ready to say, "Am I a Christian? Am I not deceived? I thought Christianity would make me always happy, and yet I am so miserable! I never supposed a real Christian could have known such abominable and unclean workings within as I have. Surely I am worse now than when I was in bondage to sin, and Satan, and the world. Besides, resolutions do not drive these things out. Neither do ordinances eradicate them. They recoil after the severest bodily mortifications and self-denial. They boldly intrude in my prayers and holiest exercises. Now and then they lie dormant, but spring up again on the smallest occasions. No one knows this but myself and God; for I am speaking of workings within. I cannot overcome them. So that, distressed and almost ready to give up my profession of Christ's name, I cry out, "O wretched *man* that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Now, observe here, this is not, "O wicked sins that I have done!" but, "O wretched *man* that I am!" It is "the flesh, with its affections and lusts" the nature that did the sins. And when our souls realize these evil workings within, headed by the power of Satan, threatening to have dominion over us, it becomes to us as clear and formidable an host as Pharaoh and his horsemen and army were to the timid and distressed children of Israel. And as nothing could pacify them but *deliverance* from this mighty power which was against them, and contrary to God, so nothing less than the setting aside in judgment of these hosts of evil within could meet the requirements of our consciences, because we know that nothing less could satisfy an infinitely holy God. And this, as we shall see, is what Scripture teaches us has been done. Blessed be the God of all grace!

Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and *see* the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace (Ex. 14:13).

Here we see that God Himself would deliver them from this mighty host of flesh, and from Pharaoh its leader, and that by His own power, without any help whatever, or struggle, or interference of man, He would do it all completely, and forever. It should also be their comfort and blessing to look and *see* what God did; and so when a soul has learned its thorough helplessness for overcoming flesh and Satan, and mastering self with its ten thousand forms of deceitfulness and desperate wickedness, and at last gives completely up, and cries out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" {Rom. 7}. He is taught by the Holy Spirit that God has delivered him through Jesus Christ our Lord. And looking back upon Him when hanging on the cross, and viewing Him now as risen from among the dead, he is led triumphantly to reply to his own question, I "thank God through Jesus Christ." He really knows what it is to "stand still" to "see" by faith a risen Savior, who was crucified, and he gives praise to God.

It is well to see how fully God has met our need in the accomplished work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only did Jesus

8. {The old man is Adam fallen; the new man is Christ (in resurrection).}

once *suffer for sins* the just for the unjust, but He, the holy One, was *made sin* for us; and we are told that God condemned “*sin in the flesh*” in Him. So that not only sins, the fruit unto death of an evil nature, have been suffered for, in that Jesus shed His blood for many for *the remission of sins*; but “sin in the flesh,” the nature that did the sins, has been so judicially “condemned” by God, and set aside as no longer to have a place before Him, that the Holy Ghost declares that our “old man” (observe here it is not old sins, but old man) “is crucified with Him.” And so completely is this recognized in Scripture that believers are now said to be “not in the flesh,” but “in Christ Jesus.” But what I want now to trace in Scripture is, that God has not only judged sins on Jesus on the cross, who purged them by His blood, but that He has judicially set aside as only fit for judgment our “old man” in Jesus our substitute, as truly as He swept away in judgment Pharaoh and all his hosts, so that the children of Israel might see them dead, and for ever after reckon them dead, and no longer living.

In tracing the narrative in our chapter, we shall see that all is accomplished by the power of God. It is redemption by *power*. In Egypt it was redemption by *blood*. In Christ crucified, risen and ascended, we have both.

In whom we have redemption *through* His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.

The blood must be the basis of all our blessing. “Without the shedding of blood is no remission.” But we want more than remission of sins; we need to be brought to glory, and it is the work of Jesus to “bring many sons to glory.” It needed the power of God to bring those who had been sheltered by blood, not only clean out of Egypt, but to deliver them from Pharaoh and the Egyptians, by bringing them through death and judgment on entirely new ground. Just as we are now, in Christ risen, not only rescued from this present evil world, but delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, and put on entirely new ground, the other side of death. Looking back upon the cross, we see it has all been accomplished through death and judgment; so that death and judgment are note behind us; risen life in Christ possessed by us, for we are risen with Christ; and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We, who were of the world, in our sins, in the flesh, and it may be under law, are *now* spoken of in Scripture as “not of the world,” “washed from our sins,” “not in the flesh,” “not under law,” but “in Christ.” All this may be traced in this scene of the Red Sea, the waters of death, forming to man’s eye an insuperable barrier to his ever entering the land. But by the power of God the waters of the Red Sea were divided so as to form a dry path, with a liquid wall on either side. The children of Israel were commanded to “go forward.” All now that was needed was faith, in order to avail themselves of the value of this work of God, to pass through according to His word. This they did. “By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.” They gladly accepted God’s way of deliverance. “The children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on the right hand, and on the left.” Thus they crossed the Red Sea. But what of their enemies which they so feared? The very work of God that was to His people their deliverance and salvation, was the very work that forever put away through death and judgment their enemies from their sight, so that they never saw them living afterwards. And does not all this bring home forcibly to our soul’s remembrance the accomplished work of

Jesus? When we think of deliverance from sin and Satan, death and judgment, where do we look? Did He not “through death destroy him that had the power of death,” which is the Devil? Was not our “old man” -- the flesh, with its mighty hosts of affections and lusts, crucified with Him? And now, having life in Him who is out of death, risen with Christ, cannot we ‘ see death and judgment behind us, as surely as Israel saw the tumultuous waves of the Red Sea rolling behind them instead of before them?

But let us never forget that God judged Pharaoh and the Egyptians, the men of flesh. With hearts filled with bitter enmity to the things and people of God (for such is the flesh -- see Rom. 8) the Egyptians hotly pursued after Israel. Like the carnal man still, they rushed madly and unconsciously into the very jaws of God’s devouring judgment. So fatally ignorant and dark is man. They appeared to succeed for a little while. The counterfeit of faith in those men of flesh *seemed*, too, to prosper for a moment. But, alas! alas! God was against them, and not for them. They had *not* believed God. They had not the shelter of the blood. God marked their evil ways, and, as usual, He took the wise in their own craftiness; for God will save His own, and He must judge the wicked. How awfully solemn this is! We read, “God looked unto the host of the Egyptians”; God “troubled the host of the Egyptians, and took off their chariot wheels,” until they said, “Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians.” We also read that “the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea.” Thus God wrought.

How very blessed is the contemplation of this double aspect of the work of Christ, in executing judgment upon all our enemies, and bringing us out by His mighty power in raising Christ from among the dead, and giving us life and liberty forever in Him. Glorious triumph! All is of God; to Him be all the glory!

It was indeed the salvation of the Lord. This is the first time, if I mistake not, that the word “salvation” occurs in Holy Scripture. It was a salvation from death and judgment, from Pharaoh and all the Egyptians. They *saw* the salvation of the Lord. And we read -- “Thus the Lord *saved* Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel *saw* the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.” They were now looking at these great enemies of their souls as dead upon the sea shore, set aside forever by the judicial hand of the living God. And so, believing what God says, that “our old man is crucified with Christ,” we are enjoined to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. As long as we reckon the old man to be living, and strive against him and his actings, we give him importance; but when, in virtue of the substitution-work of Jesus, we see that we have died, we give the flesh no place, no importance, we do not recognize it, have no confidence in it, so that our eyes are taken off self altogether, and fixed upon a risen Christ; or, if we think of the old nature and its actings, we only see it dead, we reckon it to have died in the cross of Christ, as having been under divine judgment. As long as a believer is thinking of old self and its lusts, watching against, and providing against it, he is reckoning the old man to be living, and not dead, and fear, and distress, and weakness, and failure of various kinds come out in consequence. We read that “they that are Christ’s *have* crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.” And when? Was it not when they accepted God’s judgment of it in the cross? We are therefore never

told in the epistles to crucify the flesh, or to mortify the flesh, and for this reason, because God in His abundant grace has condemned it already -- it has been crucified with Christ. But we are told to mortify, or put to death, *the members of our body* -- the unclean actings of this old nature still in us, which we are to reckon to have died. We are also taught to mortify, or put to death, by the Spirit, not the flesh still in us, but its actings, "the *deeds* of the body." All this is known only in the way of faith. Faith sees that God has done it, and believes God when He says He has done it. This is simple enough. To the apostle it was such a reality that he said, "I am crucified." And if you ask, "When?" he replies, "with Christ." And lest we should suppose it to be an alteration merely of the old nature, he adds, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I (not the old nature improved), but Christ liveth in me." It is a new nature that lives; it is Christ his life living in him; for he is a new creation in Christ Jesus.

We do well then to remember the wide contrast in Israel's experience when they looked at the Egyptians as living and when they looked at them as dead. So we may be assured that if we look into the workings of flesh in us, and be occupied with it as if living, we must not expect to be otherwise than very wretched. The most miserable people on earth, perhaps, are Christians who have given themselves up to self-occupation, and the more so because they are God-fearing and conscientious; for, having learned the folly of the world's resources, they have nothing to lift them outside self, or to keep them from being occupied with it; and surely the happiest people on earth are those who "rejoice in Christ Jesus, worship God in the spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh." Blessed are those, who, knowing they have risen life in a risen Christ, do reckon themselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God *in our* Lord Jesus Christ. Such worship and adore God as their God and Father, and praise Him for all His wondrous grace to them *in* Christ Jesus, and *through* His precious blood.

We therefore find when Israel had got the other side of the Red Sea how happy they were. It was a joyous moment; for they were entirely occupied with God, and what He had done. They were not occupied with self, nor with circumstances, but, I repeat, with God. "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song *unto the Lord*, and spake, saying, I will sing *unto the Lord*, for *He* hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath *He* thrown into the sea. *The Lord* is my strength and song, and *He* is become my salvation: *He* is my God, and I will prepare *Him* an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt Him. The Lord is a man of war: the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath *He* cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red Sea . . . *Thy* right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in *power*: thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the enemy." What a burst of triumph this is! And what a change from the sore distress they were in such a short time before! But now they had *seen God's salvation*, and His great deliverance from the formidable host of the Egyptians, which threatened to swallow them up in their wrath. They were thus in liberty and on new ground. God had delivered them, God had given them the victory; and now they are taken up with Him, praising Him, and giving the glory due unto His name, ascribing all the power and glory of their *deliverance* to Him. How simple, and yet how very blessed, this

is! What secrets are unfolded, what resources are opened up to us, in the contemplation of a crucified and *risen* Savior!

And *where*, dear Christian friends, do we take our place before God? Is it on the Egypt side of the Red Sea, or the other? You cannot be happy in the former position. There was no singing in Egypt, though perfect safety; for they were sheltered by the blood of the lamb. But after that, when they arrived at Pihahiroth, perhaps they never had such fear and distress of soul. And yet, if you had asked them, Have you not been under the shelter of the blood? they would have replied, "Yes." Have you not been brought out of Egypt, and into the wilderness, by the direct power of God? "Yes." Is not the token of God's care and presence in the cloudy pillar by day, and the fiery pillar by night, continually with you? "Yes." Then why this deep, this bitter distress? The inquirer would immediately be directed to Pharaoh and all his hosts, who were so hotly pursuing them, shut in as they were by the Red Sea. Deliverance, they would say, we want; and nothing but a mightier power than any they had ever known could effect it. Oh the misery, the self-occupation, the lack of joy and gladness of those who take their place, though secure no doubt, on Egypt's side of the Red Sea!

And, oh, how rich the blessing, when assured by the infallible word of God, and we see the accomplishment in the finished and triumphant work of Jesus through death, of deliverance judicially from the "old man," from the world, from Satan, and know we have the present possession of eternal life in Christ risen! We praise and give thanks. We rejoice in Christ Jesus our life. We look back upon the Egypt world as a long way off, and as knowing that the waters of death and judgment, which have swallowed up all that was against us, roll between us and it. Thus have we peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; we are consciously objects of divine favor, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. If when in Egypt we were met, through the grace of God, by the blood of the Lamb, it is at the Red Sea we have to do with Christ risen out of death, who is our life. And this makes all the difference. Blessed as it is to know the shelter of the blood, it is more blessed to know that we have resurrection life -- a life that lives the other side of death and judgment, an imperishable life, a life that naturally springs upward and onward, a life that has tastes, feelings, joys, and habits suited to God, and cannot rest the sole of her foot in the region of sin and Satan. Of such, too, it is written, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then ye also shall appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). We may joyfully sing

"O Lord, Thou now art risen!
Thy travail now is o'er;
For sin Thou once hast suffered --
Thou liv'st to die no more!
Sin, death, and hell are vanquished
By Thee, who'rt now our Head;
And, lo! we share Thy triumphs,
Thou First-born from the dead.
"Into {unto} Thy death baptized,
We own *with Thee* we died;
With Thee, our life, we're risen,
And shall be glorified.
From sin, the world, and Satan,
We're ransomed by Thy blood;
And here would walk as strangers
Alive with Thee to God."

Possession: Or, the Other Side of Jordan

Joshua 5, 6

It was by the power of God that the people of Israel were brought into the land. The only way for them out of Egypt to Canaan was by the blood of the lamb, and by the mighty power of God bringing them through death and judgment, as set forth by the Red Sea, and Jordan. Their feet are now in the land where God's eyes and God's blessings always are. All is of God. They now *possess* what they had so long *desired*. They did not hope to be in the land, for they were there, and every inch they stood upon was for their own enjoyment. This is to us like the truth of Ephesians, where we are looked at as now made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. This is beyond being dead and risen, it is ascension truth -- in Christ, who is in the heavenlies. This is where the grace of God has set every believer. He may not know it, but He is accepted in the beloved, blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and sitting in heavenly places in Christ. To know this as a divine reality gives true rest of soul. We are then, as to spiritual life and standing, in *Christ* in heavenly places, or, according to the type, in the land *now*. To know it as a doctrine of Scripture is one thing; for our souls so to believe it as to enter into the holiest, inside the rent veil, and thus joyfully possess the good land, so to speak, is quite another thing. But we fall short of the blessings God would have us now embrace, if we do not enter upon, possess, and enjoy this blessed nearness to God *now*; for He who is ascended into heaven, and sitting on God's right hand, being our life, righteousness, and sanctification, we are alive for evermore-righteous as He is righteous, and as near to God as He is, because of the abundant grace and power of God to us-ward in Christ. When consciously near, entering where God has set us, we do not try to get near, and strive to be there, but rejoice that He has set us there. It is all His own doing, by His almighty power, and the exceeding riches of His grace. There is no effort in this; we see Jesus our Lord, our Head, our Life, our Righteousness, and rejoice that we are in Him there; yea, filled to the full in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power. As we sometimes sing with reverence and joy --

“*So near*, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son
I am as near as He.
“*So dear*, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith He loves His Son,
Such is His love to me.”

Such is the height to which the grace and power of God in Christ, through His precious blood, have brought us, so that we wait for nothing less than the adoption, to wit, *the redemption of our body*, at the coming of our Lord. It is more than being sheltered by the blood of the Lamb, as Israel in Egypt sets forth; more than deliverance from the power of flesh and Satan, through death and judgment, and having risen life in the wilderness; it is being already in the possession and enjoyment of heavenly places by faith, in spiritual life and power. Every Christian is there; but how few seem to know it! We may say all Christians are in some sense in all three places. As a *fact*, we are still in this *Egypt* world,

though! not of it; as to *experience*, we are passing through a *wilderness*, a region which is dry and barren, and can yield nothing for our souls; and as to *faith*, we are in spiritual life, and standing in *Christ Jesus in heavenly places*. Only notice in Joshua, that after they entered the land it was not all peace and joy, but, on the contrary, conflict; for they had to fight hard in order to stand where God had brought them, and enjoy what God had given them. And so with us, for we who have entered upon our present possession in the heavenlies have to wrestle with wicked spirits in heavenly places in order to stand there, and enjoy the blessings given to us of God. And such only, be it observed, know this sharp and terrible conflict -- a conflict “not against flesh and blood,” but “against wicked spirits in high or heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12).

The first thing the children of Israel were enjoined to do, after they had passed through Jordan, carried twelve stones into the land, and set up twelve in the midst of Jordan, to the praise of God, was to make “sharp knives,” and to circumcise again the second time. It is an injunction of all importance; for “the flesh” cannot be used in the service of God, cannot be recognized as having any place in the heavenlies. It must be wholly and decidedly renounced. Whether it be the flesh in its moral, intellectual, or religious phases, (alas, how deceitful it is, and desperately wicked!) it must be wholly denied. Its wisdom as well as its righteousness, its ways of refinement as well as of violence and corruption, its iniquity, both ecclesiastical and social, must be entirely set aside -- its claims, its pretensions, its pride, its lusts, in short, the “old man” must be completely “put off.” It needs a sharp knife; but it must be done. The attempt to be something in the flesh denies the work of Christ on the cross, and that we have died with Christ. To set it up in Christians in any form is to undermine the real value of the cross, and sooner or later to lose the present enjoyment of that work in the soul. In short, to reckon ourselves to be living in the flesh, instead of having died with Christ and alive in Him, is to deny that we have either crossed the Red Sea or Jordan, and practically to confess that we are still in Egypt among the “hoppers to be saved,” instead of *possessing* and *enjoying* our true place and new relationships and privileges as seated in Christ Jesus in heavenly places.

Secondly, they celebrated the ground of their deliverance and present blessings in keeping the passover. The passover was never forgotten; it was celebrated in Egypt, in the wilderness, in the land. So with us, it should be and will be had in everlasting remembrance, that the death and blood-shedding of the Lamb of God is the alone foundation of all our blessings. If now we have entered inside the veil, it is by the blood of Jesus. Our title to be there forever is, that Jesus has entered into heaven itself by His own blood. This is never to be forgotten, for

“Our every joy on earth, in heaven,
We owe it to His blood.”

The passover then was celebrated by them after they entered the land. Now we are told that Christ our passover was sacrificed for us; and do we ever enter into the real purport and value of the Lord's supper, unless we eat it as those who are already in Christ in the heavenlies, and therefore look back upon His death upon the cross? that is, we *see Him* now crowned with glory and honor, and *remember Him* as He was in death for us on the cross. We

remember Jesus, and show His death till He come. And, seeing that we owe all our present and eternal blessings to the never-ending virtue of His precious blood, how can we ever forget such rich, such abundant mercy, in thus loving us, washing us from our sins in His own blood, and making us kings and priests unto God and His Father? (v. 10).

Thirdly, they feasted; they ate of “the old corn of the land” (v. 11). They were no longer dependent upon the ministry of a daily supply morning by morning, faithful and unfailing as it was; but they now had a continuous unceasing supply always at hand. So, now, souls who are consciously in heavenly places in Christ can feed unceasingly on Him; they enjoy not merely a living Christ who came down to die, but a risen and ascended Christ gone up on high. They feed on a triumphant, glorified Christ -- the true corn of wheat that belongs to heaven. They know the fulness of Christ is theirs. They can now enter into God’s thoughts, God’s estimate of Him, who raised Him from the dead, and said, “Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” They see Him crowned with glory and honor. He is the object of their desire, as well as the accomplisher of their eternal salvation. They see in that Man in the glory, in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, the all-worthy One, to whom angels, and principalities, and powers are made subject. They gaze by faith on Him, are attracted to Him, commanded by Him, satisfied with Him, rejoice in Him -- their strength, their sufficiency, their righteousness, their glory. They find Him enough to fill their hearts and minds; and so ardently do they long for unbroken fellowship with Him, that the fervent utterance of their hearts is --

“O fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,
That with Thy beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none may see!”

They feed, then, upon “the old corn of the land,” the fulness of an ever-living, ever-loving Savior in the glory. It is on Christ Himself they now feast, and draw their strength and comfort in blessed consciousness that they are in Him who is their everlasting life and righteousness.

Fourthly, this life of faith qualifies us for the *fight of faith*. Feasting first, then fighting. This is the divine order; and for this the captain of the Lord of hosts appears as their strength. They had to take possession of what God had given them, and all on which the sole of their foot rested, and only so much could they enjoy. Conflict, then, sharp conflict with the enemies in the land, was before them, and it would have been overwhelming did they not know that the Lord of hosts was with them. Joshua, when near Jericho, “lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man with a drawn sword in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come” This was a most affecting reply to Joshua; for he fell on his face and worshiped, and said, “What saith my lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord’s host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And he did so.” And what is this but the Lord appearing to His servant as the Commander and strength of His people? How forcibly it reminds us of the divine injunction by the apostle: “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” And besides

these points, do we not see what exercise of soul we need in order to fully place ourselves in the hands of the Lord, and realize that He is for us and with us? Thus we should encourage ourselves in Him, and lean not on fleshly energy, but on His almighty arm, and faithfulness and love. It cannot, I believe, be too strongly impressed upon our souls, that we need divine energy to take possession of, and to enjoy our blessings in heavenly places in Christ -- that Satan’s chief aim is to keep us from being inside the veil, the true ground of worship and communion, and the true power for all service. Severed from Christ, we are perfect weakness; we can do nothing. Abiding in Him, we can do all things through His strength; so that to be “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” we must have to do with the Lord Himself, as those who “reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ.” Then we look to the Lord for all, trust in Him about all, see Him in all, and lean on Him concerning all. True Christian life is, therefore, living a life of faith upon the Son of God, abiding in Him, having all our resources in Him. Then, like in Israel’s history, the victory will be ours; and when fleshly confidence is relied on, instead of the strength of the Lord, we shall bitterly feel that the enemy will triumph. May we know, beloved, day by day, more the constant practical reality of being strong in the Lord; for it is written, “Blessed is the man whose *strength* is in Thee.”

“Though numerous hosts of mighty foes,
Though earth and hell our way oppose,
He safely leads His saints along:
His loving-kindness, oh how strong!”

Thus far we have considered the enjoyment and exercise of soul *Godward* in those who had crossed the dried-up Jordan and taken possession of the land. Of necessity their feelings and experiences are different from what they were in Egypt, or in the wilderness. But having traced a little their exercises and ways *Godward* in the fifth chapter, let us now look at their ways *manward* as set forth in the sixth chapter.

Firstly, notice the distinct place of *separation* they necessarily took before men, because of their having been separated unto God. The two will doubtless always go together, for the sense of nearness to God will throw us off from that which we know to be contrary to God. They were outside the Jericho-world, for it was doomed; it was exposed to judgment, and only waited for the time of execution. This the men of Jericho did not believe; but it did not alter the fact, any more than people saying the world is getting better does not alter the verdict passed upon it -- “Now is the judgment of this world.” But, observe, this is not all; they were *outside with the ark* -- type of Christ. A Pharisee or a monk can separate himself from society; but to look at this world as a great system reared up by men and Satan, and see people too (unbelievers) exposed to the judgment of God, *having rejected Christ*, and to take a place with Christ, outside of it politically, religiously, socially, is the true path. It is because we are in Christ up there, and forever united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, that we are necessarily linked with Christ down here, and that must be in separation from the world, for they have rejected Him, and still reject. The answer was, and still is, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” No marvel, therefore, that the Holy Ghost enjoins us, when speaking of unbelievers, to “come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord,

and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor 6:17, 18).

Secondly, they took the place of *obedience*. And how can it be otherwise with us, if we realize the fact that we are united to Him in the heavenlies? When Paul, going up to Damascus, unexpectedly caught a sight of Jesus in the glory, and heard from His own precious lips, "Why persecutest thou ME," was not the immediate response of His deeply-moved heart, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" for he surely felt at once, that nothing less than full surrender to the Lord's claims would be consistent with the exceeding grace that He had manifested. If we then are really conscious of our nothingness in the flesh, as having died with Christ, and enter into and possess the blessing and enjoyment of being one with Him who is in the glory, how can we have lower thoughts than that

"Love so amazing, so divine
Demands our soul, our life, our all"?

All this is beautifully set forth in the charming picture we are contemplating. It is a divinely-illustrated scene. The people now standing on the promised land, now enjoying the long-promised, long-looked-for region flowing with milk and honey, having feasted on the old corn, and conscious of the captain of the Lord's host being with them, they surrender themselves entirely to the appointed guidance, and take the place of obedience so plainly marked out for them, whether to walk or rest, to be quiet or to shout, to sound the horn or not, according to the word of the Lord. And this proved to be the path of blessing. Their *testimony* was simply owning the Lord, hearkening to His word, doing His will, though it were to manifest to the people of Jericho a spectacle of weakness and folly. But if the priests made a long blast with "rams' horns," and for six days all the men of war compassed the city once each day with them and the ark, and on the seventh day seven times, it was according to the word of the Lord; and what could be a truer testimony? If they neither shouted, nor made any noise with their voice, neither let any word proceed out of their mouth, until Joshua bade them shout, according to the word of the Lord, it was in *obedience* to the will of the Lord. We know what success followed. And surely the path of obedience must always be with us the path of blessing. We are sanctified unto obedience. "We realize the presence of the Lord with us only in the path of obedience. To speak of union with Christ in the heavens, and our present blessings and standing in Him, while our hearts are unexercised as to obedience to the Lord in our present circumstances, is only to show that we traffic in high-flown doctrines, and know little of their true meaning in our souls. Or, it may betray the solemn fact that the natural mind has been amusing itself with an intellectual gratification on the doctrines of Scripture, without the heart in any way grasping their precious heaven-born, unfathomable, eternal realities. The great proof of love to our Lord Jesus Christ now is, that we keep His commandments, prize His sayings, and treasure up His words; and to such, and to such alone, He has promised to manifest Himself, and make them know that He and the Father have taken up their abode with them. Precious, profoundly precious realities for our enjoyment! and suited surely to such as have been rescued from this present evil age, who have died with Christ, and now live in Him, and who are characterized as not walking after the flesh, but

after the Spirit. It is this entire consecration to the will of the Lord, which is so needed in these times of laxity and carelessness -- whole-hearted dedication to Him, full surrender to His never-failing guidance, and the paramount authority of His holy word at all cost. Such hearts can truly sing

"While here, to do *His will be mine*,
And His to fix my time of rest."

Thirdly, let us look at their service. What was it? Was it to do what they could to improve Jericho? Was it to endeavor to elevate the masses of the inhabitants of this strongly-fortified and well-built city? Was it to tell them that the world was getting better? Certainly not; for none of these things would be true. But it was to *save sinners out of* this already doomed city. God's testimony had gone out against it. The city, the king, and all the men of valor were given to Joshua for destruction; but there were some to be saved out of it -- some who would not come into judgment, and the faithful servants of God were intent on saving them. A harlot among them there was; but she was a woman of faith, had shown it by favoring the people of God, and openly confessed her faith by putting the scarlet line in the window. Little could the wise and mighty men of this famous city suspect for a moment what the scarlet line meant, even if they had seen it. Not so, however, with God's people. For when the wall had fallen down flat, the city was taken, and the process of utter destruction was about to begin, at Joshua's command "the young men that were spies *went in, and brought out* Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and *they brought out* all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel." And they burnt the city with fire. We are told that "Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had, . . . because she hid the messengers which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho," at whose command she had bound the "scarlet line" in the window. (See Josh. 2:18; 6:22-25.)

And does not this exquisite picture again read a further lesson of precious instruction to us? For if the world through which we are passing is under condemnation, if Jesus meant what He said when He uttered the solemn verdict, "Now is the judgment of this world," and if there be not one line of Scripture enjoining us to improve it, what is our position toward it, but as separated ones by the grace of God to minister to souls, and seek to bring them out? to do good to people in it, and expect no good thing from it? Hence the Holy Spirit pointedly marks out the faithful servants of the Lord Jesus as those who "went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles for His name's sake." And surely, if our place now is oneness with Christ in the heavenlies, what can our position here be but separation unto the Lord in fellowship with every member of His body (the only membership in the New Testament), as those who warn men of their danger, and seek to save believing Rahabs? Thus God's way has been, and still is, in judgment to remember mercy. And how blessed this service is to

"Call them in" -- the Jew, the Gentile;
Bid the stranger to the feast;
Call them in -- the rich, the noble,
From the highest to the least.
Forth the Father runs to meet them,
He hath all their sorrows seen;
Robe, and ring and royal sandals,
Wait the lost ones -- "call them in."

But here is also a solemn word of warning against lust and covetousness; for we are beset with snares on every hand. One of those who had professed faithfulness to God saw a Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, and coveted them. Accordingly, he took them, and hid them in his house; but God saw him, and His judgment fell heavily in consequence. And the common baits of Satan to professing Christians now we all know to be love of dress -- "the Babylonish garment," and the possession of wealth -- "the wedge of gold." And it is very remarkable that corrupted Christianity, the Babylon of the Apocalypse, is likened to a woman arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls. Joshua warned the people to keep themselves from the accursed thing, lest they made themselves accursed; but Achan heeded it not, and by his sin brought misery and defeat upon all the people, as well as swift destruction upon himself. May the Lord graciously keep us true to Himself in heart and purpose, and from *loving* the world, or the things of the world. But, for this, we need to have our souls happily occupied with Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

And now, beloved fellow-Christians, let us see how far we have entered into this place and character of blessing and testimony into which God has so mercifully brought us. Do we habitually take our place *before God* as those who are already brought nigh to Him in Christ Jesus in heavenly places? Are we struggling to get near through the workings of a spirit of bondage and unbelief? or do we bless and praise God that our "old man was crucified with Christ," and that we are a new creation, and have life, standing, righteousness, and nearness to God in Christ ascended? We have it, I say; for God has given it to us; He has raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Blessed rest for our souls! solid and abiding peace too! Well, being then in all the acceptance of Christ Himself, in whom we are made accepted, do we know what it is practically to put a sharp knife to "the flesh," and to rejoice in Christ Jesus, in the precious remembrance of His body given and His blood shed for us? Do we know what it is in God's presence, in the holiest of all, to feast on an ever-living, ever-loving Christ -- "the old corn of the land"? and, having feasted, do we realize strength to fight against Satan and his hosts for the *possession* of those heavenly blessings which God has given us in Christ now to enjoy? And, as to our position here *before men*, do we maintain the place of *separation with Christ* as not of the world, because it is doomed to judgment? And do we seek to tread the path of *obedience*, and bear the *testimony* of the Lord, whatever reproach and censure it may bring upon us? Do we labor to bring souls out of it, by the power of the precious blood of Jesus, the true "scarlet line"? And do we steadfastly decline the fashionable and costly attire, and the will-be-rich spirit of this present age? These are solemn, all-important questions for our consciences, beloved fellow-Christians, on which our present joy or sorrow, as well as the glory or dishonor of the Lord, hang. May we unhesitatingly grasp and delight in our present blessings, in the spirit of communion and worship, in Christ inside the veil, and know them as deep and unfading realities, so that we may be found in the true place of separation and faithfulness before men as to bring praise and glory to God.

Many conflicts the children of Israel had to encounter, and trials of various kinds, before the glory of Solomon dawned upon

their land; still, having been sheltered by the blood, redeemed out of Egypt by the power of God, brought right through the Red Sea and Jordan, they were now standing upon the inheritance which God had given them, and could rejoice in hope of glory in their land, and the subjugation of all their enemies. Nay, more, according to the teaching of Moses, for "the days of heaven upon earth," when a greater than Solomon will rule.

The children of Israel were no doubt a people taken up by God in the flesh, and blessed as a nation on the earth; but without doubt they remarkably set forth in type many things both for our instruction and warning. But believers now are actually redeemed, delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. We are safe for ever, because of the eternal efficacy of the blood of Jesus. Having life -- eternal life -- in Christ risen and ascended, and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Him, it is for us, as before noticed, to *enter upon*, take *possession* of, and with worshiping hearts *abide* in this place of wondrous blessing in Christ which God has given to us; and also, thus blessed and made known to us by the Holy Ghost, to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Thus enjoying our present standing and relationships in Christ, how can we but obey the will of God, and wait for His Son from heaven?

"Ascended now in glory bright,
Life-giving Head Thou art;
Nor life, nor death, nor depth, nor height,
Thy saints and Thee can part.

Then teach us, Lord, to know and own
The wondrous mystery,
That Thou in heaven with us art one,
And we are one with Thee!

And soon shall come that glorious day,
When, seated on Thy throne,
Thou shalt to wondering worlds display
That Thou with us art one."

The Unreasonableness of Rationalism

Rationalism is not faith; and “without faith it is impossible to please God.” Faith believes what God says, and because He says it. If we believe because we prove it, or because it is sanctioned by others, it is not faith in God. Faith is subjection of the heart to the testimony of God. Such do not say, we will not believe till we understand, but they say, “By faith we understand.” We believe on the authority of God, and want no other sanction. “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true” (John 3:33).

That man has reasoning faculties capable of arriving at correct conclusions about natural things no one questions, but “the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit God.” If men were unfallen and unalienated, or if God had not spoken, and the Holy Spirit had not come, there might be some excuse for men forming their own opinions, and reasoning out conclusions as to divine things; but, as we have in the written word a revelation from God (and all Scripture is give by inspiration of God), every attempt at reasoning about it instead of receiving it and obeying it, only shows the unreasonableness of such a course; the insubjection of the mind to the will of God. We shall find that such activities, if closely examined, not only manifest pretension and unbelief, but undermine the foundations of the truth, and give nothing -- absolutely nothing, on which a sin-burdened soul may rest.

1st. The unreasonableness of Rationalism comes out in man’s assumption that he is competent to judge what God will do, or ought to do; and that he is capable of deducing opinions about Scripture instead of bowing to its divine authority. He thus fatally errs in sitting upon a judgment-seat, and arraigning God and His word before it, instead of coming as a creature before the judgment-seat, and receiving the divine verdict. Is it not a totally unreasonable course for men to pursue? Besides, does not Scripture plainly say that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Is it to be wondered at that such persons never know present “peace with God”? A true Christian has joy and peace in *believing* not through reasoning. We never knew anyone reason himself into peace with God, but we have known many reason themselves out of it. The Christian is admonished again. to cast down “imagination,” or reasonings, etc. (2 Cor. 10:5).

2nd. The unreasonableness of Rationalism is manifest in ignoring the fact that man is a *fallen* sinner in Adam, thus “under sin,” and exposed to death and judgement. Why is man exposed to death and judgement? We are told because of sin. How came sin into the world? By one man. We read, “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Thus through man, Adam, all are fallen, all are sinners, all are by nature children of wrath, and therefore exposed to death and judgement. This is why the natural man is not spoken of in Scripture as competent to deduce opinions, and form conclusions in divine things, but is pronounced to be “dead in trespasses and sins,” and that he “receiveth not the things

of the Spirit of God.” The rationalist’s idea, therefore, that God having given him reasoning powers, he ought not to believe anything he cannot reason out and understand, will not avail, for, since our nature’s fall in Adam, “the carnal *mind* is enmity against God,” and man is so alienated from God that his *will* is opposed to God, his mind “not subject to the law God, neither indeed can be: so then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God” (Rom. 8:7, 8). Where then is his competency to judge and to receive the things of God? Besides, how came man with the knowledge of good, and evil? And further, Is it reasonable to suppose that God would bring in atonement for sin at the costly price of His own Son, if men were not guilty and helpless sinners? Is not the thought wholly unreasonable that God would send His Son into the world to accomplish eternal redemption, if we were not under sill, fallen sinners in Adam? And if men were not *lost*, would He have given His only-begotten Son; *to save*? Redemption from what? Whom to save? If men could have become righteous by their own doings, Christ would not, need not have die for sinners; for “if righteousness come by law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal. 2:21).

3rd. The unreasonableness of Rationalism is also apparent in the active search by antiquaries, in history, geology, and other sciences, for proofs as to whether the Scriptures are true or as if God’s thoughts and ways must be cast into in molds which a always according to men’s notions of science. Were the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ according to scientific principles, or not? To an upright exercised soul before God, Scripture needs no further proof and witness of its truth than itself. If Moses spake of the commandments which he gave to the children of Israel as the commandments of Jehovah their God, and warned them against adding to, or diminishing from that word, their divine authenticity was abundantly confirmed by prophets who were raised up after him, by our Lord Himself, and by the apostles, who quoted freely from the writings of Moses. As to the imperishable certainty of the word, we find Isaiah saying, “The word of our God shall stand for ever.” David said; “For ever, O Lord, the word is settled in heaven.” Prophets so uttered the words of God that they boldly exclaimed, “Thus saith the Lord”: or “The word of the Lord which came unto Jonah, Micah, Zephaniah, and others. Our Lord also spake of “the Scriptures,” and declared that “the Scripture cannot be broken”; and so endorsed the divine authenticity and authority of the books of Moses, that He said, “If ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?” Again, after His resurrection from the dead, He so taught the divine authenticity of the Old Testament that He said unto His disciples, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me” (Luke 24:44). As to His own ministry He authoritatively said, “The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”; and, “heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” The apostle Paul teaches us that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,

and is profitable," etc. Peter says, "The word of the Lord endureth for ever," and he ranks Paul's epistles with "the other Scriptures." John so recognizes the canon of Scripture as the word of God, and now complete that he says,

If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of I the holy city, and from the things which are written ill this book (Rev. 22:18, 19).

Is it not then most unreasonable, in the face of such manifold testimonies of inspired prophets and apostles, and also of the Lord Himself, that men should still labor to form opinions and to deduce conclusions from the Scriptures, instead of being subject to them as the word of God? Besides, the difficulties of geologists about various strata, and marine shells and boulders being found at great depths and heights, and the antiquaries' fossils and remains showing as they say gigantic beasts once existed not united to this globe, are still answered by the remarkable silence of Scripture as to what might have occurred between the first and second versus of the first of Genesis. In Gen. 1:1, we are merely told that God in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, and we reckon that what God created must have been perfect. The second verse describes a chaotic state, hence the conclusion that some great overthrow must have taken place between the first two verses. The present state of the earth began to be formed in the 3rd verse, not the chaotic state found in v. 2. Whether thousands of years intervened between vv. 1 and 3 or not, or what existed then we are not told, only the earth seems to have been submerged; for on the third day God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear; and it was so." Between the first and second verses the divine record leaves abundant room for vast changes to have taken place. The truth is that a divinely-wrought faith bows to the word of God because it God's revelation; whereas unbelief is busy with excuses for relying on its own opinions and conclusions. What will men's opinions and traditions be worth when they see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory?

4th. The unreasonableness of Rationalism is further exhibited by its advocates caviling with the word of God, without reading and examining it carefully and continuously; hence the ignorance of Scripture manifested by most of their champions. It is evident that they who merely look at the Bible as a compilation of historical facts, of which the writers were witnesses, and which they recorded as their memory led them, have not the word of God at all; but only a collection of men's opinions and writings. The truth however is that the prophecy which came in old time was not by the will of man, but what "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." It is certain also that instead of giving their own opinions, or relating what they knew, they did not fully know the meaning of what they were inspired to communicate; hence we read, they inquired and searched diligently . . . searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and glories which should follow." (See 1 Pet. 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:10, 11.) In the New Testament also we find that though John was in the garden of Gethsemane with Jesus, when in an agony He fell on His face and prayed, "and his sweat was as it

were great drops of blood falling down to the ground," yet John makes no mention of it in his gospel; whereas Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who were not present, record it fully. It is certain then that both in the Old Testament and the New we do not find the authors merely writing, what they knew and personally understood, as men generally write their books. We are told therefore that "God" not only "spake" in time past unto the fathers in the *prophets*," but hath in those last days spoken unto in His *Son*." We have then the inspired word of God.

5th. The unreasonableness of rationalism reaches its climax in the rejection of the only way in which God in grace, holiness, in truth, and justice, could save a sinner. That which makes the strong man shrink from death, dread the Lord's coming, and tremble at the thought of Judgment, is the fear of God's dealing with him in strict justice; whereas in the cross -- the death, and shedding of the blood of Christ -- sin is judged already, righteousness established, truth fulfilled according to holiness, God vindicated, satisfied and glorified, and all that believe are justified from all things, set free, and brought into new and everlasting relationship with God as His children. Oh, the unreasonableness of disputing instead of receiving this great salvation! What utter folly for men to be arguing instead of fleeing from the wrath to come! What can be more foolish than to refuse Him, that speaketh from heaven -- who brings salvation to us in Christ, and through His blood, to be had at once on the principle of faith, without money and without price? How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

Papers Regarding F. E. Raven

Extracts of Letters

Glad to hear from you. Christ is "the truth." Any deviation, therefore, from the holy standard of the written word, must affect Him, whether we discern it or not. When the truth is operative in us by the power of the Spirit, it is always to honor the Son, and glorify Him; but when it is not the truth, Christ is not ministered to us, and souls are damaged, even it may be to "overthrow the faith of some." No doubt dear John Newton was correct in saying

"You cannot be right in the rest
Unless you think rightly of Him."

Neither of us, I trust, would seek to make Mr. Raven offender for a word. Far be the thought. On the contrary, where there may be a doubt, we should willingly give him the advantage of it. To do unto others as we would be done by becomes us, and pleases the Lord, if we would be among those who keep His word, and do not deny His name. *His word* and *His name*, we may be sure are the weights and balance He has given us for testing every thing that professes to be of Him. If these are forgotten, or laid aside, "reasonings" and "philosophy" soon usurp their place; the former of which we are admonished to *cast down*, and the latter we are warned against most solemnly. All is to he refused that is "not after Christ," for "in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Rev. 3:8; 2 Cor. 10:5; Col. 2:8, 9). Our place then, clearly, is to cast down reasonings, to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, to beware of systematizing truth by philosophy, to stand firmly for the final and conclusive authority of the written word, and to honor and not deny the name of Him at which, ere long, every knee shall bow. While the Scriptures plainly teach these things, they also give us the most solemn warning concerning those who are "lukewarm," and, therefore, indifferent as to whether our adorable Lord be honored or dishonored (Rev. 3:16). May we lay these Scriptures to heart as words in season, believe them, and act on them before the Lord as His word which abides for ever.

All were, I think, glad to hear your strong condemnation of statements touching our blessed Lord not found in Scripture; so that the question now between us is whether a verbal condemnation is sufficient, or whether the word of God calls us to separation. Of the latter course many of us have had no doubt for some time, and it is my frequent prayer to God that, through His grace and power, you and I may yet "be of the same mind in the Lord."

Passing by Mr. R.'s objection to the precious doctrine of "the righteousness of God" being now applied to the believer in an *absolute* way, which I judge to be contrary to Scripture and seriously false; omitting some strange doctrines brought out at Witney in 1888, and statements since as to eternal life, equally untrue and damaging to souls; I now briefly take up one line of Mr. R.'s teachings as not only unscriptural and therefore

unsound, but *necessarily* calculated to result in much dishonor to our blessed Lord.

Mr. R.'s doctrine, brought out in January, 1889, that all the acts of the Lord were not the manifestation of eternal life has been often referred to; and two brothers who were present on one occasion when Mr. R. taught this, informed me that Dr. C. asked if our Lord's sayings, when on the cross, to His mother and the loved disciple were the manifestation of eternal life? And Mr. R. replied, "No, but consistent with it." Now where in Scripture do we find such doctrine, such a question, or such an irreverent reply? Are we not told to "hold fast the form of sound words"? (2 Tim. 1:13).

Such teaching necessarily sets souls to consider whether this or that in our Lord's life manifested eternal life or not; and thus speculate on, define, discuss, and *divide* the sacred person of our precious Savior. As a fact, we can scarcely meet with one who has been exposed to this teaching, who does not glibly enough speak of this being human and that divine, this the acting of eternal life and that not, to the damage of souls, and the dishonor of our Lord.

We find also Mr. R., in June, 1889, ridiculing the idea that "Christ never ceased to be the exhibition of eternal life from a babe in the manger to the throne of the Father." He says, "Think of a helpless infant being the exhibition of eternal life!" Where does Scripture speak of the incarnate Son as "*a helpless infant*?" That blessed One who truly said, "I was cast upon Thee from the womb; Thou art my God from my mother's belly . . . Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts (Psa. 22:9-10).

Again in March, 1890, Mr. R. says, "I pointed out the monstrosity of an assertion of the Major's {H. H. McCarthy}, that the Lord never ceased to be the exhibition of eternal life from a babe in the manger to the throne of the Father." These and other irreverent statements that have followed, are, I judge, only the outcome of the new doctrine that our Lord only manifested eternal life in some of His acts. When Scripture speaks of the holy Babe, the Spirit calls Him Jesus, i.e., Jehovah-Savior, Immanuel or God with us, Christ the Lord, the Child born, the Son given, Son of God, the Mighty God, God manifest in flesh, the Eternal Life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us. John came baptizing that He might "be made manifest to Israel" (John 1:31).

Again, I copy a letter of Mr. R.'s in his own handwriting, dated July 30th ult. The question proposed was, "Could you say that the Lord in His every act down here did not manifest eternal life?" And Mr. R.'s reply was, "The only mention of the manifestation of eternal life which I know in Scripture is in 1 John 1:2, which I judge is referred to as a special grace to the

Apostles. Publicly the Son revealed the Father. Eternal life was with the Father.” Many who have fallen under the power of this new teaching have gone still farther in irreverence. I only give a few instances out of many.

Mr. C.’s letter, was said to have been privately circulated for five months as precious truth; but after having been faithfully exposed *by one of Mr. R.’s opponents*, and said by him to be blasphemy, it was withdrawn by the author, with an expression of sorrow for having written it.⁹

Another well-known preacher, Mr. M., when the evil doctrine was at first exposed by *another of Mr. R.’s opponents*, acknowledged that he had used the expression eighteen months before, and met the charge by explanations, contending for the soundness of the profane doctrine that our Lord, after talking with the woman, of Samaria, retired into the enjoyment of communion with the Father. Could we have thought it possible that such appalling things were among us?

Another active preacher was, only a few weeks since, confronted with having taught something very similar about our Lord at Sychar. Scripture says, “Jesus,” that is Jehovah-Savior “sat thus on the well.” How clear the written word makes everything!

As to Eternal life, writing to Mr. R., Mr. W. says: It was taught publicly in my hearing more than two years ago, by one of your principal followers, that Eternal life was like a vast estate to which we truly had a title. A very high wall surrounded it however, inside which we never had been, nor had we ever had a dish of gooseberries out of it. It had been taught also from house to house, that Eternal life was like a glass of water on the table, it was for you, but you had not tasted it, nor even taken it in your hand.

And so we might go on, for the increase of such profanities is almost daily made known; so that, as Captain B wrote to me lately, the whole house is becoming leprous, and its defilement can no longer be localized. Carnal ways, and moral failure are often the bitter fruits of evil doctrine (Gal. 6:7, 8; Rev. 2:6, 15).

With these facts before us, and the Scriptures too, the question is, what is the true and faithful course for those who love our Lord Jesus Christ? Would He not have us keep “His word” and not deny His “Name?” Has He not given us the most solemn warning found in the whole compass of Scripture against being *lukewarm* towards Himself? Are we not familiar with the word for an evil day charging us to purge ourselves from vessels to dishonor? “If a man purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.” How full of encouragement! And what then? “Follow righteousness, faith, love, peace, with them that call on the Lord, out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:20-22). If we would serve and honor our Lord Jesus Christ, there

certainly is no other way open than separation from evil, departing from iniquity. How else could we be loyal to Him, and seek to clear His holy Name from unscriptural doctrines and profane statements which are derogatory to Him, who is the “holy” and the “true?”

It has been well said that Christ has not been presented to us for our discussion, but for our apprehension, faith, confidence, love and worship. And another was wont to say,

It never was nor I trust ever will be the notion of brethren that the truth of Christ’s person . . . was to be sacrificed to outward unity; it is making brethren of more importance than Christ . . . I must have a true Christ.

I speak not of sides in this painful matter. I know of no side but the Lord’s. May we never forget that “No man knoweth the Son but the Father,” and “He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him.”

Our Lord’s reply to the insolent question, “Who is this Son of Man?” has forcibly reminded me of what is being questioned now, and His warning has come with uncommon power. “Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus and *departed*, and did *hide Himself from them*” (John 12:34-36). Can we conceive a more solemn warning and dealing of the Lord?

In conclusion, I only ask that everything be dropped that is not according to the written *word*, and that the peerless, spotless *Name* of our adorable Lord and Savior may be maintained by us at all costs according to His own infinite perfections and glory. How soon He may come for us!

H.H.S

Sheffield.

9. Withdrawal is not enough when the Lord has been dishonored. It must with godly sorrow be judged as evil in His sight? {? -- sic}. There is no other way of such clearing themselves (2 Col. 7:11).

Without separation from evil we dishonor the Lord; and unless we accept the judgment of an assembly gathered in His name as to evil, we do not “keep the Spirit’s unity.” It is independency (Eph. 4:3).

What Scripture Says About Eternal Life

We know nothing about eternal life but what God has graciously revealed to us by His Spirit in the written Word. May we turn to it with reverence and godly fear, and receive its teaching with worshiping hearts, while remembering that the Spirit searches “the deep things of God,” and makes us “know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

Scripture teaches us that “eternal life” was promised before the world began. We read also of “the *promise of life* which is in Christ Jesus”; and that “*the gift of God is eternal life* IN Christ Jesus our Lord” (Titus 1:1, 2; 2 Tim. 1:1; Rom. 6:23).

We learn also that “eternal life” was *with the Father*. “Father” and “Son” being correlative terms, it is impossible to exclude the thought that He who was the eternal life was also the eternal Son. He was “that eternal life which was with the Father.” As with the Father, eternal life was in the person of the eternal Son before He became flesh.

But eternal life has been “manifested.” Precious truth! “The Word of life” has been seen and heard, looked upon and handled. “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory.” “That eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us” (John 1:14; 1 John 1:1, 2). In His whole life, ways, words, and being, eternal life was so manifested that it was seen, heard, and declared. The life was manifested in the perfection of His person, in perfect love, obedience, and righteousness, in unbroken communion with the Father, and care for others; yea, the very “words” of our incarnate Savior were “spirit” and “life.” He was “the life” and “the truth” seen and heard. A great mystery indeed, which cannot be explained by human language. Like the vessels of the sanctuary which the Kohathites knew were to be borne by them, but were so concealed from their view that they dare not *touch*, much less uncover them, under penalty of death; they were to *bear them* as Jehovah had commanded, but not to “touch” them “lest they die” (Num. 4:15). The deep sin of the human mind is attempting to unfold and explain that of which the Spirit saith, “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh”; and again, “No man knoweth the Son, but the Father” (1 Tim. 3:16; Matt. 11:27). Unfathomable mystery indeed! When the believer thus calls to mind His lowly and lonesome path through this scene, and discerns in “the Man of sorrows” “the true God and Eternal Life,” his heart becomes filled with joy and gladness. He adoringly worships, and finds real delight in confessing and serving Him. In the gospel by John we see eternal life manifested in the Son; the first epistle of John treats of the character of eternal life as communicated to believers.

But though eternal life was *promised*, was *with the Father*, and in due time was *manifested* unto us, how could it lay hold on us who were such sinners? The answer is, *Love was also manifested*, and reached its immeasurable climax in the death of Christ, God’s Son, His death upon the cross; for in this way God’s gift of eternal life could be communicated to us. “In this was *manifested* the love of God toward us, in that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9). Thus we learn that, by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, two marvelous blessings have been secured for us

(1) the removal of our sins judicially and for ever by the one offering of Himself, and

(2) that we might *live through* Him. Here again our souls are touched with the infinite and unfathomable love of God toward us, and are filled with thanksgiving and praise. Divine grace so wrought that we might thus “live *through* Him”; for our Lord said, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:21). Yes, men must be judicially cleared from their sins by the sacrifice of Christ, in order to stand in true relationship to God. What unutterable love, “that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!” How impossible to contemplate such grace through righteousness without the heart exclaiming

“Everlasting praises be
To the Lamb that died for me!”

And further. In resurrection -- the resurrection of the Son from the dead, by which He was marked out Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness {Rom. 1:4} -- we behold Him alive again, and that for evermore. By divine power, and in divine righteousness, God has intervened, and raised Him from among the dead, and glorified Him as Man at His own right hand. *Now* we read that “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” Not only “through” Him who bore the judgment for it, but “in” Him glorified.¹⁰ What divine wisdom, love, and power are thus brought to view! Are we not ready to cry out, while looking up to Him who said, “I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God” --

“Shall Thy praise unuttered lie?”

The gift of God then is eternal life -- nothing less than eternal life. We therefore read of an inspired apostle writing to believers, and saying, “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:11-13). Thus the believer on the Son of God has received the wondrous gift of eternal life, the source and seat of which is, not in Adam, but in the Son. An entirely new life has been communicated to us, and we are to know that we have it. We are said to “have passed from death unto life.” The effects of having this life are love to the brethren, obedience, righteousness, communion, and prayer, into all which the Spirit surely leads; in short, to walk as He walked, for all these ways were perfect in Him who is our life. Nothing can be more clearly set forth in

10. The Son is its source. Nothing in it has helped to bring it about or to produce it. It is the gift of God, and in the Son. He said, “I am . . . *the life*.” It is then for us a new and eternal life both *through* and *in* the Son, and the gift of God.

Scripture than the present possession of eternal life. "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Though communicated ¹¹ to us, it is in the Son as the Source and Fountain, and enjoyed by us through feeding upon Him.

We were *dead*, dead in sins, until, by grace, we heard the voice of the Soft of God and *lived* -- "The *dead* shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall *live*." Till we had faith in the atoning work of the Son of man we had *no life in us*; then such have *eternal life*; and Jesus added, "I will raise him up at the last day" (John 5:25; 6:53-57). What divine certainty these words give its of being in glory with the Savior! Can we wonder at anyone saying, "Oh, how precious is the truth that the life, such as it was with the Father, such as it is in the Son, is given to me"?

But besides having eternal life, and *because* we have remission of sins and are sons, the Holy Spirit has been given to us as the seal and earnest of our inheritance, the anointing and Spirit of adoption. Thus we have *power* for communion with the Father and the Son, and to joyfully serve and honor our Lord Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 8:15; 15:13; Eph. 1:13, 14).

Having received the life which is in the Son, we are to *manifest* it in our mortal body. Holding as we should the flesh for dead, we are to be "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" (2 Cor. 4:10). While in a world so contrary to God, with the flesh in us, and Satan blinding and deceiving sinners and tempting saints, we are to reckon ourselves to have died with Christ, and, as created in Christ Jesus, alive unto God, we are to manifest the life of Jesus in our mortal flesh. This is practical Christianity. For such to live is Christ.

We also find that Timothy was enjoined to "lay hold on eternal life." Had he not received the gift of eternal life? Most assuredly he had. But for such to "lay hold on eternal life" is to grasp it by faith in all its glorious and eternal results when we shall "reign in life" (Rom. 5:17). We thus lay hold of all that

eternal life involves, and so make all out own by faith, that all its future reality, as made known to us in the word of God, and to be consummated when we are with Christ and like Christ, may be now enjoyed. This glorious prospect being before us, and the Spirit revealing Him to us, we shall be led on, Christ reproduced in our life and walk, and we detached from what is unsuited to Him.

It is clear, that when the Lord reigns the saved of the tribes of Israel, and Gentiles also, will go into life eternal, in an order, no doubt, suited to people blest on the earth (Dan. 12:2; Matt. 25:46).

But Christ is to be *manifested again*. When the Incarnate One was on earth, as we have seen, eternal life was manifested. Then He was alone {John 12:24}. But when He is manifested in glory, "the sons of God" will be manifested with Him. "When He shall appear [or be manifested], we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." And we also read, that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear [or be manifested], then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory" {Col. 3:4}. Thus, when the mortal body is changed, and fashioned like unto His body of glory, we shall be conformed to the image of the Son, to the everlasting praise of the glory of His grace. Being already alive spiritually, we look for the Savior to change our body of humiliation, and fashion it like unto His body of glory. We *have* eternal life already; but when the Savior comes the "hope of eternal life" will be realized in the corruptible putting on incorruptibility, and the mortal putting on immortality. This we know will take place in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. "Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed tip in victory" {1 Cor. 15:54}. Precious fruit of divine grace! How can it fail to fill us with unending praise?

While Christianity in truth begins, as we have seen, with the possession of eternal life, and this life is in the Son, "the end" is also eternal life; but all "the gift of God." We have eternal life, while we are going on "in hope of eternal life." We find redemption also presented to us in Scripture in the same way. We have redemption now, and are waiting for redemption. Of the believer it is said, "In whom [Christ] we have redemption through His blood," and yet we are waiting for "the redemption of our body" (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 8:23). The same may be noticed as to salvation -- we are saved, and yet we look forward to salvation. We receive "the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls," and yet "shall be saved from wrath through Him." The same inspired writer that says "who hath saved us," also says, "We look for the Savior . . . who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." Thus change and translation we are elsewhere told will take place when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. Then, having eternal life in all its glorious issues, we share with Christ the Father's presence in the Father's house, in all the unutterable blessedness of eternal glory.

H.H.S., January, 1890.

11. Another has said,

The important point is to see that divine life is really communicated, that I receive what I had not before . . . To deny that divine life is communicated is a most fatal error . . . Christ is my life; we are begotten of God, born of God. It is not it mere change produced, though there is such change, but the communication of life . . . The true knowledge of the Father in sending the Son is really the possession of eternal life . . . God gives us eternal life . . . "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" -- an entirely new thing in man. Christ Himself is our life, and we have not this life before receiving Christ (J. N. D.'s *Letters*, vol. 2, pp. 210, 212).

Thus life is eternally in the Son before the world, and promised before it, given us in Him; i.e., is manifested in the second {last} Adam the power shown in resurrection, and its place in the counsels of God in the glorified Man for ever . . . Saints were quickened by the power of it at all times, but it was not brought to light . . . Old Testament saints will clearly have been born again, and have the kingdom" (*Notes and Comments*, pp. 319, 317, 320).

Paul and John reveal our being in a wholly new place in Christ; but John is mainly occupied with revealing to us the Father in the Son, and thus life, by the Son in us; whilst Paul presents us to God, and reveals His counsels in grace" (*Introduction to the Books of the Bible*, p. 37).

A Letter

1 Kenwood Avenue, Sheffield, Nov. 19th, 1891

Dear {J. S.} Oliphant,

A four-paged tract has lately been put into my hands containing two letters, one of them written by yourself to Mr. Raven, and the other his reply; about which I cannot forbear offering a few remarks for your solemn consideration.

It is well sometimes that writers should be reminded that when the Spirit of God works in us, or by us, He brings the *words* of the Son of God to our remembrance, testifies of *Him*, glorifies *Him*, takes of the things of *the Father* and of *the Son*, and shows them unto us, &c. This we are taught in John 14, 15, 16, as you know. Thus clear landmarks are given us, so that we are able to distinguish between the "philosophy" of men, against which He warns us, and "the truth," into which He guides.

It was the absence of these marks of the Spirit's operations that first awakened my fears as to Mr. R.'s writings; but it was his irreverent and unsound statements concerning our Lord, and his persistent refusal for a year or more to judge them to be evil (and, as far as I know, they have not been judged to this day), that made separation {June 1890} necessary whatever it might cost. How else could we have a good conscience toward God? Does not He look for our faithful stewardship of the mysteries of His truth which He has committed to our trust, and command us to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints?" (Jude 3; 1 Cor. 4:1-2).

In your printed letter, dated September, 1891, you touch, if I mistake not, the root of R.'s evil doctrines, when you refer to his statement that

"the Son of Man, the Second Man (though not yet revealed) was ever essentially . . . in the Son," (November 21, 1890),

but you do not appear to see that this statement is necessary to fit in with his oft repeated doctrine, that --

"Eternal life in Scripture always stands in connection with manhood, whether in Christ or in us."

To justify this, he is obliged to teach what you say --

"that man or humanity existed in some shape or form before the incarnation,"

or, to quote his own words, that --

"The Son of Man, the Second Man, . . . was ever essentially in the Son."

This is very serious, as everyone knows who is walking in the fear of the Lord, and subject to His word.

It is well you have brought this fundamental error concerning the Person of our Lord before Mr. R., and have plainly intimated to him that one of his statements --

"shows a want of Scripture basis for the thought; or, why not say 'Scripture teaches,' and then it has the authority of the word of God?"

But to my mind you spoil all; for what you declare to be **"most objectionable,"** you excuse by saying, **"I am sure you do not hold what it implies."**

How could you pen such a sentence? The point is, what does *Scripture* say? There we find a teacher is held accountable for what he *says*. Paul as an apostle delivered two persons to Satan "that they may, learn not to blaspheme." They had been uttering what was blasphemy. He also refers to some in another epistle, who were "Saying (observe *saying*) that the resurrection is past already," and he adds that "their *word* will eat as doth a canker." Another Apostle wrote, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this *doctrine* (the doctrine of Christ), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (see 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; 2 John 10, 11). Our Lord's words also were, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Matt. 12:37).

How could anyone then who was walking uprightly before the Lord, either request, or receive "explanations" of words which dishonor Him?

The principle is most demoralizing and unjust. Moreover, does not the Spirit of God teach us to resent any indignity to the Son, anything that depreciates Him, or either adds to or takes from God's word concerning Him? The Son of God truly said, "I am . . . THE TRUTH"; to advance any thing opposed to Scripture must therefore dishonor Him, whether it be as to "the righteousness of God," "eternal life," or even "saying that the resurrection is past already." This would, more or less, overthrow the faith of some, and perhaps, sooner or later, plunge them into the whirlpool of scepticism and infidelity.

It seems from the second page of your printed letter, by the words "as to which I wrote before," that you have more than once asked Mr. R. to "withdraw" this "most objectionable" statement. But suppose he had withdrawn it, which he has not, what about many other statements equally "objectionable"?

For example: --

"What characterized the Second Man could not include all that was true of a divine Person, as self-existence, having life in Himself, omnipotence, omniscience, and many other attributes of a divine Person" {F. E. Raven} August 25th, 1890.

I scarcely know how to copy such an irreverent sentence, while I wonder at anyone daring to dissect the great mystery of the Person of God manifested in the flesh.

Here again, instead of at once condemning such utterances, you apologize for him, for what you say he *means* is the opposite of what he has said. Where is conscience in all this? Your words are,

"I understand you to mean that what the Son always was as a Divine Person, characterized Him as Man when He became a Man."

Is not this precisely contrary to the statement I have just quoted from Mr. R.? Moreover is nothing more than withdrawal required from Mr. R. for advancing such doctrines concerning our adorable Lord, as if it were merely an inaccurate word, or a word misspelled or misapplied?

IS IT THE CHRIST OF GOD OR A FALSE of which Mr. R. speaks? Is he really speaking of Him who said when He spake of His body, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up"? or, "Before Abraham was I am"?

Where in Scripture are we taught that the essence of manhood was ever in the Son? According to Mr. R., the Son was ever something more than Deity, and His perfect humanity, as you put it in the first page of your tract, "existed in some shape or form before the incarnation." Thus both the Deity and Humanity the Son are perverted by these new doctrines.

Can we conceive a more flagrant error? What is it but to dishonor the Son of God, and to rob souls of the true Christ? It is certainly an invention of the human mind of the worst possible description, because it dishonors the Son of God, concerning whom it is said, "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John 5:23). How inadequate, therefore, would it be merely to "withdraw" such seriously false doctrines! No true lover of Christ could for a moment entertain it.

Of the soul-restoration of the Corinthian saints, whose errors were incomparably less than what is now before us, we read --

Ye sorrowed after a godly sort; what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter 2 Cor. 7:11).

This is the divinely given path of soul restoration from evil, and there is no other. Is it not something more than the acknowledgment of inaccuracy, or a withdrawal, as you suggest? Ah, my brother, it is as true as ever, that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump." When I think of cases of restoration many years since, I marvel at where brethren have drifted; and when I call to mind your own faithful testimony nearly thirty years ago as to Bethesda fellowship, and compare it with your present letter, I can scarcely forbear asking, "Is it the same man?" while my heart cries, "Hold Thou *me* up, and I shall be safe!"

All this, thank God, I can write without the consciousness of a trace of unkind feeling toward you or Mr. R.

Well do I remember, about the year 1849, that a statement was current among us, and found in one of our hymn books, *concerning our adorable Savior*; which was pointed out, as unsound. The writer of the hymn {J. G. Deck} was an honored servant of our Lord, and had long been highly esteemed by us, and deservedly so, for his work's sake. He had, for some years, known what it was to have to do with God, and to be before Him. He therefore, became deeply exercised, especially about one word that he had written {in a hymn}. Not long after, several servants of Christ met at Bristol, when the writer of the hymn

stood up, and, in the most solemn manner, before us all, said something like this,

I stand convicted of being a liar, and under God's reproof.

We were all deeply affected and surprised. He then read,

Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Prov. 30:6).

The moment was solemn beyond description, and I remember being strongly impressed with the thought that he was a man speaking before the Lord. He proceeded,

I have written concerning our Lord, 'Our *mortal* flesh and blood partake,' (Hymn 327), and I have lately gone through the Greek Testament to see if I could find any authority for speaking as I have of our Lord's body having been 'mortal,' and I have found none. Thus I have added to His words, and now stand convicted before the Lord, and before my brethren, of being 'a liar.'

No doubt it was a time of many tears, but afterwards, of the warmest expressions of forgiveness and confidence towards our beloved brother, Mr. J.G.D., now with the Lord.

We may be sure that when the Spirit works in restoring any who have openly dishonored our Lord, He works in a similar fashion to the examples to which I have referred. We should know too, that in Mr. D.'s case, no serious action had been taken against him, but that most of those in fellowship then saw nothing wrong in it, as is almost always the case. Mr. D. felt truly that his failure called for more than withdrawal, which is certainly, a new and demoralizing principle, and only now matched, as far as I know, by "explanations" of what is false and dishonoring to our Lord. How sweet it is in a time like this to hear God saying "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly"; and again "Them that honor Me I will honor."

There is another point to which I must briefly call your attention. It is this. It has been published far and wide, that Mr. R.'s doctrines are "heavenly truth," and the same as Mr. Darby and other leading teachers have always held. I can only say, after watching matters among us during 52 years while preaching and teaching the Lord Jesus, that I believe such a statement to be entirely contrary to fact.

I conclude by saying in the words of another, "If the Lord's name be used by any as a cover for darkness and evil, and the name of the Church be used as the name of a place where those on earth, who are indifferent to Christ's honor and to holiness in faith, doctrine, and walk, may congregate, His name is put to shame, and the Holy Spirit dishonored."

That our gracious God may speedily give to Mr. R. and his supporters that godly sorrow which worketh repentance, is the earnest prayer of

Yours in Christ Jesus our Lord,
H. H. SNELL.

(Not published)¹²

A Few Observations on Mr. Oliphant's "Remarks" On a Letter To Him by H. H. Snell

Few things are more distressing to a servant of the Lord, than being brought into collision with his brethren; especially with any he has long known and respected. But when "the momentous subject of the Person of Christ," and the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel are in question, it is impossible to keep a good conscience by silence. Our Lord's words were, "He that is not with Me, is against me" (Luke 11:23).

If when the typical sacrifices were in danger of being devoured by birds of prey, "Abram, drove them away"; and if, when the sons of Kohath had to bear the typical patterns of the Person of Christ, they were not to "touch any holy thing lest they die," or "see when the holy things were covered lest they die," with what holy reverence and godly fear should we think and speak of the sacred Person of the Son, whom no man knoweth but the Father? (Gen. 15:11; Num. 4:15-20). Are we not admonished to "Hold fast the form of sound words?" And was another wrong when he said, "We are only sure of the truth, when we retain the very language of God which contains it?" I think he was not.

There were two reasons why I replied to Mr. {J. S.} Oliphant's printed and published letter to Mr. Raven.

1. Because it certainly conveyed to my mind, and to many others, that Mr. O. so disapproved of some of Mr. R.'s statements as to have wished him to withdraw them, and spoke of one of them as "most objectionable."
2. Because I felt compelled to show that merely withdrawing irreverent and false statements concerning our adorable Lord, was both insufficient and unscriptural.

It now appears, from Mr. O.'s recent strictures on my letter, that he did not mean, when he used the words "most objectionable," and the like, that Mr. R.'s statements were bad doctrine, but only that they were capable of a wrong construction, or were put forth in an ambiguous style. I confess that I do not perceive a shade of ambiguity in the passages quoted from Mr. R.'s words; on the contrary, they are set forth in plain and unmistakeable language.

In calling attention to a few points in Mr. O.'s tract just issued, it will not be my business to notice what is personally offensive. That I can leave. With regard to alleged "misrepresentation," all I can say is, that I showed both his letter and my reply to competent persons before it was sent forth, and afterward, for the purpose of detecting any inaccuracies that I

might have overlooked; for I believe in the membership of the "one body" (1 Cor. 12:12); and I trust I should be the first to condemn any approach to misrepresentation if found in my letter.

All this is short of the grave points at issue. The question of such serious moment is, whether certain doctrines of Mr. R.'s and his supporters are according to Scripture or not. My judgment is that those who turn to the Scriptures as their sole authority in dependence on the Spirit's teaching, will have no difficulty in deciding; while those who indulge in reasonings, and look at this man or that, on "such a momentous subject," will lose their enjoyment of Christ. Another has solemnly warned us, that "to separate the Son of Man and the Son of God, is to dissolve Christ."

The details of Mr. O.'s pamphlet I shall not now take up, but briefly draw the reader's attention to some of the principles it sets forth, which appear to me to be unsound and damaging to souls.

1. Within the compass of about a page, Mr. O. repeatedly tells us what Mr. R. *meant*. Now while none of us should be captious, or seek to make another an offender for a word, but be ready to encourage the first sign of self-judgment in one charged with teaching error, yet for one to send forth erroneous statements concerning our Lord, and when charged with them for his chief advocate to say, "I am sure you do not hold what it implies," is a destructive and demoralizing principle, and cannot for a moment be accepted as according to holiness and truth. Scripture has settled it for us. It holds us responsible for what we *say*. There we find two persons solemnly charged with "*saying* that the resurrection is past already," and its effect was to "overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:18). It is not difficult to see that nothing could more effectually further the work of Satan in subverting souls, than assuring those troubled about it that the author does not mean what his words imply. Scripture further says, "By *thy words* thou shalt be justified, and by *thy words* thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:37).

2. Somewhat akin to this, is another attempt of Mr. O.'s to justify Mr. R. by bringing forward one of his good sentences to meet a bad one. The error of this was pointed out by Mr. {Charles} Stanley in the beginning of this painful and humiliating controversy. It is an old device of Satan, almost always found associated with false doctrine, and dates as far back as the garden of Eden. It is the plea one constantly hears. When a sentence is brought before Mr. R.'s supporters which they cannot defend,

12. {This was available in pamphlet form.}

they bring one of his true sentences to meet it. But it is a corrupting principle; and it is clear that no amount of truth added to it can neutralize or justify one unscriptural sentence about our adorable Lord. On the same corrupting principle Mr. O. speaks of some taking a sentence out of Mr. R.'s letters, and speaking of it as bad doctrine; as if a thousand additions of the truth could correct one false statement. If this mode of proceeding be admitted, then there will be no end to the propagation of false doctrine. An inspired apostle said, "We are not as *many* which *corrupt the word of God*, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ." And another apostle plainly declared that "No lie is of the truth" (2 Cor. 2:17; 1 John 2:21).

3. The entire absence of Scripture proof for Mr. O.'s defense of Mr. R.'s doctrines must strike everyone who is accustomed to regard "It is written" as the sole authority, and only rule for the conscience. It may be easy to use special pleading, and to put sentences together in a clever way to meet an opponent, but cleverness is not the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. When "the momentous subject of the Person of Christ" is concerned, we must have Scripture; for nothing but Scripture can satisfy an upright soul.

4. We are enjoined to be "simple concerning evil," that is to reject it when found to be not according to Scripture. Many have long since rejected several of Mr. R.'s statements, because they believed them to be unscriptural and dishonoring to our blessed Lord.

Where, let me ask again, do we find in Scripture such words as --

"The Son of Man, the Second Man, (though not yet revealed) was ever essentially in the Son" {F. E. Raven} (Nov. 2/90).

Again, "He is revealed as last Adam and Second Man, though ever such in His own Person, for the Second Man is 'out of heaven'" (Nov. 25/90).

To justify these statements is impossible; for the thought of the essence of humanity cannot be excluded from them as having been "ever essentially in the Son." Where in Scripture have we such teaching? Where in Scripture is there authority for writing such sentences?

Again, "What characterized the Second Man could not include all that was true of a divine Person, as self-existence, having life in Himself, omnipotence, omniscience, and many other attributes of a divine Person" (August 25/90).

Now this doctrine comes to me not only as without Scripture authority, but as opposed to its teaching. If we turn to the 16th chapter of Matthew, we find: -- "When Jesus asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that the Son of Man am?" (observe "Son of Man"). "They said, Some say thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets" (that is, He was a good man without divine attributes). He saith unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (mark, the Son of Man is the Son of the living God, having therefore the eternal and divine qualities of the *living* God). And Jesus answered and said, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath

not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The Son of Man is Son of the Father.

On another occasion the Son of Man said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19).

When I wrote to Mr. O, in November last, I had no thought of re-opening the question with Mr. R., which had long ago been judged and settled in a corporate way, by an assembly gathered together in our Lord's name, owning His authority in their midst {by the assembly at Bexhill, June 1890}. The decision thus Scripturally arrived at, which has been accepted by hundreds of meetings and thousands of saints, puts Mr. R. and his supporters under the discipline of the Lord. Nor can it be ignored without further dishonor to God, and the giving up of the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and every true principle of God's assembly (Eph. 4:1-3).

Those who claim a liberty to speak of our precious Savior and Lord in words not according to Scripture, and confide in reasonings instead of casting down imaginations, cannot fail. to go on from bad to worse; but those who bow to the written word, and own the teaching of the Spirit who glorifies the Son and testifies of Him, will find the Lord Himself increasingly precious to them.

Surrounded as we are in these last days with the superstitions of Popery, refined and flagrant infidelity, the apostasy of Protestantism, with its Ritualism on one hand undermining the truth of the accomplished work of Christ, and its Rationalism on the other hand, refusing the all-sufficiency and divine authority of the written Word, it is impossible for any to walk according to our Lord's mind, who are not subject to the authority of Scripture as final and conclusive. Nor is it possible to have true thoughts of the Son of God, or of the mystery of His Person, further than it has pleased God to reveal them to us in His word; for "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father" (Matt. 11:27)

H. H. S. 1, Kenwood Avenue, Sheffield. January 13th, 1892.

While the second part of this paper was still in the press it pleased the Lord to take my father, Mr. Snell, to Himself. Brethren desiring copies can have them by applying to me, MRS. W. OXLEY, 1, South Terrace, Rotherham.

Recollections of the Last Days of Charles Stanley

It is not long since that Mr. Stanley, who has been well known for many years all over the country as a preacher and writer, published a little volume ¹ to show how remarkably God had led him ever since his conversion.

Nothing more is attempted now than giving a few details of his closing days, which many have desired to have; and, in doing this, our chief object is to make it profitable to the living rather than to eulogize the Lord's beloved and honored servant, who, we are assured, labored, and spread the savor of Christ, with expectation of reward at His appearing. Few have had the privilege of preaching the gospel of God for upwards of fifty-five years, and fewer still, who, 'within two days of falling asleep, have closed their gospel testimony with a more earnest appeal to the unsaved to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, and to rest on God's word as giving to every believer the divine certainty of eternal salvation.

For three years, or more, he had been now and then interrupted in his public ministry by serious attacks of illness. And early in the autumn of last year {1889}, in walking to the meeting-room one Lord's Day morning, he was suddenly seized with such an attack of giddiness and faintness that he said he felt as if he were dying, and would have fallen had he not laid hold of an iron railing which was close at hand; at that moment, however, his soul was happily lighted up with the words, "In thy presence is fulness of joy." This illness laid him aside from preaching for some time, though still able to write for the press, and carry on correspondence with many of the loved servants of our Lord both at home and abroad.

Toward the end of September last, he went to Southport for change of air, and often suffered while there from attacks of faintness. It was feared then that he would not preach much more, and his own expressed thought at that time was, that his public evangelistic labors were drawing to a close, but that, perhaps, he might be permitted of the Lord, for a little while longer, to have the privilege of ministering to his fellow believers the following Scripture, Num. 8:25, 26, having greatly impressed his soul at this time. While there, he rallied much, and, after a few weeks, returned home. A little before leaving Southport, he preached with much joy in the Lord, and with the assurance of there being marks of God's blessing accompanying the word. After his return to Rotherham, he felt so much better that he resumed preaching every now and then; but we all saw that he was far from being in his usual measure of health. In public ministry he was now led again to his favorite theme, "The Righteousness of God," in which he was instructed beyond most, and in the proclamation of which it seems the Lord had much honored him twenty or thirty years ago. We have been informed by several who were privileged to

hear him, that his preaching was with uncommon power and profit.

By gift and by grace received, he was an eminent evangelist, and had great delight in the service, both in oral ministry and in the writing, publication, and gratuitous distribution of gospel tracts (millions of which, for many years, have been spread almost all over the world), and, during the last ten years, he was editor of the monthly serial *Things New and Old*. He contended earnestly for the divine authority of the holy Scriptures, labored also to build up the children of God in their most holy faith, and was careful to have nothing less before him than the blessing of the whole church of God. To the importance and scriptural teaching of this, he often referred. His ministry, in a word, was concerning our Lord Jesus Christ. He well knew that the Holy Ghost was the Glorifier and Testifier of Him.

It was early in March that he paid us his last visit, and remained for several hours. He then appeared to be so much better, so full of energy, and so free from weakness and faintness, that during a considerable portion of the time he read aloud some extracts of a correspondence on great principles of divine truth which had lately interested him; and he seemed to have regained so much of his accustomed measure of health, that we began to think we had been mistaken as to the diseased heart having arrived at the stage we had supposed. Within a few days after, we visited him, when we found him again fairly well. In his accustomed brotherly kindness, he met us at the Railway Station, drove us to his house, where we had a happy time of prayer and conference, and, on leaving, he again accompanied us into the town in order that we might see as much of each other as we could. Little did we then think that it would be the last time we should meet together for prayer and conference on the things of our Lord Jesus Christ. But so it was. Though he was our hearty fellow-laborer in the Lord's work we did not often meet, because we had our separate lines of service, though, for many years, we were in almost constant correspondence, and often asked each other's prayers, especially as to teaching and preaching the Lord Jesus Christ, and any other matters in His blessed service which might be pressing on us. Thank God, the intimacy between us, as the Lord's servants, which was begun in 1867, was never broken; only, as time rolled on, it became more spiritual, and more truly Christian fellowship. The reason, by God's gracious blessing, was this: as a rule, we never met at each other's houses and separated without bowing before God in prayer and thanksgiving. So mutual was the felt importance of this, that even if the interview was necessarily short, one or the other would say, "We must have prayer before we part." His prayers seemed usually to be, not only those of a man who loved the Lord Jesus, but to be the utterances of one who was very near Him. If we had to speak of the failings or sins of others, we usually reminded each other that our prayer more than ever should be, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe!"

1. *Incidents of Gospel Work, Showing How the Lord Has Led Me* (G. Morrish, London).

His Last Published Tract

The last tract he published was entitled, "Be ye reconciled to God." We subjoin an extract, because of its earnest appeal to souls to be reconciled to God, and to find all they need in our Lord Jesus Christ.

In 2 Cor. 5 you will notice that the deep enjoyment of divine certainty, even in the presence of death, showed the same peace (vv. 1-9). Then the fact that we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. Are we justified? It will be manifested then. Are we reconciled? It will be manifested then. Blessed thoughts! Hence we are perfectly free to labor for Christ, and He will give us each our reward. We know the terror of the Lord to such as are not justified and reconciled, and thus we persuade men. Only mark, that we are made manifest unto God. We have to do with God; and if we know that we are reconciled to God, all is as clear now to faith, as it will be then to sight. Still it is most important to think of being manifested there. Are you quite happy about that?

There is also new creation brought before us as a present thing: "Therefore, if any man be *in Christ*, a new creature [or new creation]." But is this present? Yes, "old things *are passed away*; behold, all things *are become new*. And all things are of God, *who hath reconciled* us to himself by Jesus Christ," &c. . . . He sees you *in Christ*, a new creation. Oh, fellow believer, the Holy Ghost declares that God hath reconciled you to Himself. Will you doubt Him? Surely it is only as we believe God that we can proclaim the true gospel, and beseech sinners to be reconciled to God, to cease their fighting and rebellion.

But there is still the difficulty of sin in me. Does God reconcile my sinful nature to Himself? Surely not! Now mark the last verse, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made [or become] the righteousness of God in him." Compare this with another Scripture: "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin [or by a sacrifice for sin], condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). In both places, all is of God. If the Holy Son of God was thus made sin, a sacrifice for sin, as well as bare our sins in His own body on the tree, then both our sins, and sin the root, have been dealt with by God, in the blessed Person of His Son, so that before Him there is nothing left to condemn. "There is, therefore, *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Mark, it is not in us, in ourselves, but *in Him*. He has been made sin; He has endured its awful judgment; and in Him we are a new creation. *In Him* we are the righteousness of God. In Him, whiter than snow. In Him, the believer is a justified and a reconciled *person*. And all is of God . . . If you are a believer, this is as true of you as of the believer 1800 years ago. Why should you doubt? And will all this be displayed in us when in the glory? Certainly; that is, we shall be the display of the righteousness of God as in Him. Nothing short of this would satisfy the perfect love of God to us. So that as to judgment, all fear is gone for the child of God. What we are now, such we shall be presented, "holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight." Oh, take care that no one moves you away from this certain hope of the gospel. It does not yet *appear* what we shall be, but we shall be like Him when He appears (1 John 3:2). Oh, how blessed to be manifested, justified, and reconciled, without spot before God. But do not look within at your own state, or your own

righteousness for all this, but at the testimony of God to His risen Son at His right hand. Think what it cost Him, that you might become the righteousness of God *in Christ*. If an unconverted soul should read this, I entreat you to cease your striving; be ye reconciled to God. The work is done; peace is made by the blood of the cross; Jesus risen from the dead, shows His hands and His side, and says, Peace be unto you.

His Last Gospel Preaching

On Lord's Day evening, March 2nd {1890}, beloved C. S. preached the gospel of the grace of God in Sheffield, and evidently with great joy and the consciousness of the presence and blessing of the Lord. We happened to be in the West of England at that time, and preaching at the same hour in Taunton; and in writing to him the next day, spoke of the help and comfort the Lord had given us by His Spirit in declaring the gospel from Rom. 5:8-11.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [reconciliation].

He replied the next day, March 4th, saying,

I think I never felt more the deep reality of the gospel than on Lord's Day evening, and from the same words as you had at Taunton. I got ready to go to see you this morning, but was seized with cold just at the time for starting. So I have deferred my visit. The cold affects me much. But we are in the Lord's hands . . .

Referring to the truth, he added,

I feel more and more, it must be Christ and the whole church of God . . . May He lead us in His paths.

From some of those who were present that evening, we heard that his word was with great power. This was the last time he preached the gospel on a Lord's Day, and it was evidently, both to speaker and hearers, a *very* solemn time. No doubt, he felt (as the Lord's earnest servants, advanced in life, must do) the possibility that each time they have the sweet privilege of announcing the glad tidings it may be the last, and that, not only on account of the uncertainty of life, but because of the coming of our Lord; for His coming cannot be far off, it must be near, and, perhaps, nearer than any of us think. At any rate, it is a most blessed manifestation of the goodness and mercy of God, to find, after more than fifty years of preaching up and down England, Scotland, and Ireland, the life-giving, soul-saving gospel of His grace, that any of His servants find more liberty and joy in announcing it at the end of their course than when they began. And why? Because they increasingly realize that it is God's glad tidings, that it is concerning His Son, and that it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Precious considerations! We believe that no tongue can describe the delight the Lord's servants have when they see sinners broken down before the Savior, and, through His cleansing blood, having to do with God. We read that

in the presence of the angels of God, there is joy over one sinner that repenteth.

All who knew beloved C. S., can testify that his preaching was not a mere rehearsal of the way of salvation, or a formal exposition of the word, or trafficking in unfelt doctrines; but when he spoke of the Savior's love, His death, blood-shedding and triumphant resurrection, his whole soul seemed longing for his Master to be honored in the salvation of sinners, the deliverance of those who were in bondage, and the building up of His saints.

On March 10th, the anniversary of his birthday, he wrote to his daughter, Mrs. A., saying.

I have entered my *sunny* 70th year . . . I would remember David in all his troubles, and sing with him Psa. 34 . . . I feel assured, however stormy may be the path of the little that remains, I am entering my *sunny* year of 70, and shall in a few more days at most, be in the kingdom and the glory of Him who has loved me, and died for me. Oh, His mercy, and His grace upon grace for these past 69 years, He only can know, for it is infinite. We ought to expect Him to-day, and this is the cure for every care of to-morrow.

His Last Address to Christians

On Thursday evening, March 13th, he felt so much better, that he went to Sheffield, and gave an address to Christians. His subject was, "The Lord's Coming." He commenced the meeting that evening, by reading, with much emphasis, the hymn beginning with

"A little while' the Lord shall come,
And we shall wander here no more;
He'll take us to His Father's home,
Where He for us has gone before-
To dwell with Him and see His face,
And sing the glories of His grace." &c.

After the hymn was sung, he prayed earnestly for God's guidance and power by the Holy Ghost in ministering His truth, and for blessing to the hearers. He then took up the burden of Dumah, the words of scorn of those who hated God's people, however low their condition might be, like others who said, "Where is thy God?" or the scoffers now, who say to us, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Turning to Isa. 21, he read, "The burden of Dumah. He calleth to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh, and also the night; if ye will enquire, enquire ye; return, come" (vv. 11, 12). He then showed from various Scriptures, that the hope of God's ancient people, the Jews, is the coming of Messiah and His reigning over them on the earth, and that this will be preceded by judgment and great tribulation -- a night of weeping before the morning of joy, when they will be peacefully sitting under their own vine and fig tree. Then will be fulfilled the Scripture that Jesus will reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously (Isa. 24:23). He pointed out how Scripture contrasts the hope of God's earthly people with the Christian's hope of our Lord coming at any moment with a shout to take us up to meet Him in the air, and conduct us, His heavenly people, to our Father's house; and that our present posture should be one of watching and waiting for Him. We shall see His face, be with Him and like Him for ever.

It may be very soon, for "the night is far spent." In connection with this he read and dwelt on 1 Thess. 4:15-18. He also said, If any of God's people present are in trial and sorrow, he would ask them to remember David at Ziklag. Not only had he lost almost everything he had in the world, but "the people spake of stoning him," yet withal we are told that "David encouraged himself in the Lord his God," and in three days he was actually in the kingdom. How very near our Lord's coming for us may now be. Let us encourage ourselves in Him, and look for His coming!

He said to a friend sitting near that evening, "I am very unwell. Shall I give out, that I will preach here next Lord's Day evening, if well enough?" "No," replied the friend; say, if the Lord will." This he did in a most emphatic way, and added, "If I come, I shall hope to preach on the righteousness of God."

But this was his last public address to the saints. It was a remarkably solemn time, and he spoke with great calmness. There was a large company present. Those who knew him, and loved him, little thought it would be the last time they would hear his voice. But so it was. The address had been very impressive, and his hearers were made to feel that, "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand."

After this, he continued unwell, and kept indoors, but often writing to us and to others on the things which concern our Lord Jesus Christ.

The day after he returned from Sheffield, Friday, March 14th, he felt so unwell, that he had serious doubts of being able to preach on the following Lord's Day as he had hoped. He wrote, "I have felt very ill in the night; my throat so bad that I could scarcely speak . . . my voice is still bad. The Lord will give strength if He will have me go to Sheffield on Lord's Day." He was, however, too unwell to come.

In the following week, March 19th, he wrote, "I am feeling very poorly. My cold is rather worse. *All is my Father's best*, as dear H. said, and it is true for me." . . . Referring to a paper for the press he had just revised for a friend, he proposed there should be "added to it *a little warm gospel of divine certainty for souls*."

His Last Address after the Lord's Supper

On Lord's Day, March 23rd, he was much better. He wrote to us, "We had a happy time this morning around the Lord's table. I am thankful to say the Lord enabled me to be there. My throat is a great deal better, but I still feel it is rest the Lord would give me. He enabled me to speak a few words at the meeting.

From a friend who was present, and had known him well for many years, we heard that his ministry that morning was exceedingly sweet and profitable. His subject was, "The Good Shepherd," from John 10; and he dwelt mostly on vv. 14, 15, "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." This friend said, that his address that morning was most striking, particularly on the good Shepherd saying, "I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine as the Father knows me" (New Translation {of J. N. Darby}). He referred also to Psa. 23, to show the present

activities of the Shepherd toward His sheep, after bringing before his hearers His personal glory and perfections.

On Wednesday, March 26th, we received from him an affectionate note, mostly in reference to the Lord's work and the teaching of Scripture on certain subjects which were particularly exercising his mind at that time. We had hoped to have heard that he was very much better, but, in reference to this, he only said, "I feel I shall not be well enough to be out at night to-morrow," (alluding to his proposed lecture in Sheffield that evening), and added, "May the Lord be with you in a special way!"

On this same day, March 26th, his beloved daughter, Mrs. A., and her husband, paid him a visit, and remained until the following day. How little did they think that this would be the last time they would see their dear father before he departed to be with the Lord! Mr. A. says,

He met us on the road before reaching the house, his face beaming with joy and welcome. He at once said, "You have come to see me in my *sunny* 70th year." He repeated several times during our visit, "my *sunny* 70th year." He appeared weary, as if from overwork, though bright and hopeful.

The following morning (Thursday) at the gathering of the household, for reading the word of God and prayer, dear father read very impressively Psa. 46, and appeared to feel deeply every sentence. He spoke therefrom very sweetly, emphasizing that in the world we must have sorrow and tribulation, but the believer, resting in the Lord, should not "fear, though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." He dwelt with much joy on vv. 4, 5, "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God"; and in conclusion, exhorted us in all our sorrows and troubles to remember that "the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

His prayer, after the exposition of Scripture, was very touching, pouring out his soul in its desires and thanksgivings to God his Father in sweet child-like confidence. He seemed to remember many things before the Lord in supplication, and, at the close, prayed especially for each of his children and their families, separately and severally by name, his heart going out in tender, loving affection after each.

Afterwards, when walking with dear father in the garden, he remarked, "I do not think I shall be long down here in this world." He was looking upward toward heaven, when he spoke, and there was something in the tone of his voice that so filled me with emotion, that I could offer no reply. Shortly after this we left him, for the last time bidding him farewell, little thinking that we should no more see his bright, happy face, or hear his loving voice again.

Three days after this he was with the Lord.

His beloved daughter, Mrs. C., also came on Thursday, the 27th, and their parents greatly enjoyed having their two daughters with them. It was all, doubtless, graciously so ordered by the Lord, and this brief, but happy visit will ever be remembered with thankfulness.

The Secret of True Fellowship with God's Servants

Though we were very much of one mind, we did not see alike in everything, yet the intimacy between us not only continued year after year, but it grew in brotherly confidence. And why? Because, as we have said, we bowed together before the Lord in prayer and thanksgiving. Often too, we remembered each other when alone in prayer, according to that Scripture, "Pray one for another." We have sometimes ventured to say, when we have seen some of the Lord's people very intimate with each other, that it will not last, but probably be connected with bitter fruits, because it seemed more like the social element of the world than that of "fellowship in the Spirit." Alas! how often have we seen sad results. For saints to love each other in the Lord, care for each other for His sake as members one of another, and in the Spirit of Christ to bear each other's burdens, weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice, is very different from mere intimacy of association. When the Lord is before souls as to this, we may be quite sure there will be a coming together before Him, and, in prayerful dependence and thanksgiving, owning Him as the alone power by the Spirit for "building up," and for being "builded together" according to God.

We remember, about twenty years ago, visiting a large city, where two very able and gifted servants of the Lord were in fellowship, and giving themselves wholly to the work of laboring in word and doctrine. We called on one of them, and, in course of conversation, inquired if he and the other brother ever met together for prayer, and the reply was. "No." We then said, "You may be quite sure that God, however He may bless us individually, will never uphold us as fellow-laborers in His service, unless we come together before Him to guard and bless us as such." In this instance, we had painfully to hear that coldness and distance seemed increasingly to characterize them. Those who knew the beloved servant of the Lord, the reminiscences of whose last days we are recording, would unhesitatingly say, He was emphatically a man who loved and valued prayer. All those who pursue a path of dependence and prayer because it becomes us and honors God, will surely find that word fulfilled in their happy experience, "Them that honor me, I will honor." We may be quite sure that God only is the Source and Sustainer by His word and Spirit of all true Christian fellowship; and when this is not practically owned, it proves that such are not going on as to it in faith, without which it is impossible to please God; and if the intimacy should continue, it will sooner or later degenerate into an amiable kind of social or religious intercourse without being spiritual or profitable.

The Last Funeral He Attended

On Friday, the 28th of March, our dear departed brother was well enough to attend the funeral of one who had long been in fellowship, and for whom he had much regard. He was a working man, very much respected, and C. S. remembered that he had been recommended to his employers by him thirty-five years ago. This was the last funeral that he attended, and it was in the same

cemetery in which his own body was deposited only a few days after.

That day he was fresh and manifestly happy in the Lord, but it was observed by one present, that he appeared unusually impressed with the solemnity of the occasion. The service began by a brother giving out the hymn

“We have a home above,
From all defilement free;
A mansion which eternal love
Prepared our rest to be.

The Father’s gracious hand
Has built that blest abode;
From everlasting it was planned,
The dwelling place of God.

The Savior’s precious blood
Has made our title sure;
He passed through death’s dark raging flood
To make our rest secure.”

Then C. S. read the first few verses of 2 Cor. 12, and said, “I knew a man in Christ thirty-five years ago,” referring to the departed, whose body was then before them, and spoke of his godly deportment and Christian-like behavior toward those with whom he had been associated in his daily employment. He then, with great solemnity, referred to the many sudden deaths which had lately taken place in the neighborhood, and with what a loud voice they spoke to us of ETERNITY. “This is Friday,” said he, “perhaps, before another week is ended, some of us may be buried. If death come, are you ready?” (There was a solemn silence for several seconds.) He then went on to say, “Through mercy, infinite mercy, I can say, I am; are you? [A pause.] Perhaps all here could not truthfully sing the hymn we have just had, “We have a home above.” Are there any present who could not sincerely say, ‘We have a home above?’ [A pause.] If so, let us turn to the word of God, and see how you can be fitted to sing now, as under the all-searching eye of God, ‘We have a home above.’

Our beloved brother then read,

Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that, through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14, 15).

He read also,

Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me; in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me), to do thy will, O God. Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one

offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin (Heb. 10:5-18).

Then he turned to the crowd of hearers, and preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection -- His finished work upon the cross, His triumph over death and Satan, and His coming again to take His own to heavenly glory. Then he read,

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by sight): we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1-8).

Some men tell us, said he, and they are learned men too, that we cannot know with certainty whether we are saved or not; and some even preach that we cannot be sure as to the forgiveness of sins till the judgment of the great white throne. But what does the word of God say? Then pointing to the first verse of the portion just read, he repeated, with solemn emphasis, “We know, (thus we have the assurance) that we *have* a building of God (yes, we have it), an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” “We have” then, this heavenly and eternal building of God, and “we know” we have it in the heavens if we die. Yes, “we have a building of God,” a house, “our house.” God hath “wrought us” for it, “an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” What divine certainty God’s word gives those who believe on His Son! “We have a building of God.” Having received the forgiveness of sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is given to indwell us, “therefore,” it is added, “we are always confident.” Observe, not “always doubting,” as some say, but “always confident, *knowing* that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith, not by sight.) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” Does it say we are confident because of what we feel? Certainly not; but by knowing it on the authority of God’s word of eternal and unchanging truth, that because of the finished work of eternal redemption, and the gift of the eternal Spirit, we are always confident.”

He then prayed.

At the grave he again referred to 1 Thess. 4, when the Lord will raise the bodies of His saints to meet Him in the air, and the following hymn was sung:

“Christ the Lord will come again,
None shall wait for Him in vain;
We shall then His glory see;

He who died to set us free.
 Then when the Archangel's voice
 Calls the sleeping saints to rise,
 Rising millions shall proclaim
 Blessings on the Savior's name.
 This is our redeeming God,
 Ransom'd hosts shall shout aloud;
 'Praise, eternal praise be given
 To the Lord of earth and heaven.'"

Earnest prayer was then offered by our brother Mr. C. for the salvation of the unconverted who were present, many of whom had been fellow-workmen of the deceased, and after committing the body to the Lord's safe keeping till He come the people separated.

How remarkable that this honored servant of the Lord should have said at the last funeral he attended,

Perhaps, before another week is ended some of us may be buried. . . . If death come . . . through infinite mercy, I can say that I am ready.

In less than forty-eight hours after this he himself had departed to be with Christ, and in less than a week his body was laid in the same cemetery where he had so solemnly spoken. And yet it is not to be wondered at, if we only consider that those who live in prayerful dependence on the Lord, and in communion with Him, are led to speak sometimes beyond what could have been premeditated.

Nor can we forbear at this time kindly asking the reader of these lines the same question, If death come, are you ready? Do not say, Yes, unless your authority is founded wholly on the blood of Christ, and the word of God. Do not look at yourself, your feelings, your experience, good or bad, but look wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work in His death and blood-shedding on Calvary. Take your true place before God as a guilty, helpless sinner, justly exposed to His condemnation, and approach God by the blood of His Son, and you need not fear; for God delights to welcome, bless, save, and comfort those who thus honor the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. You cannot be saved by works, either wholly or in part, for Scripture says, "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." Happy those, who simply resting before God on the blood of Jesus, can truly say,

"My hope is built on nothing less
 Than Christ my Lord and righteousness;
 I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
 But wholly lean on Jesus' name;
 On Christ, the solid rock, I stand,
 All other ground is sinking sand."

His Last Gospel Paper

On Saturday, March 29th, our beloved brother wrote a stirring gospel paper for *Things New and Old*. It was on the words of our Lord Jesus, "I have compassion on the multitude." He sought to show how compassionate our hearts should be toward the thousands round about us who are still in their sins, and going on the road to everlasting destruction. We make a few quotations from it to show how graciously God kept the heart of His servant

fresh and fervent in the work of the gospel to the last day. On this day, March 29th, exactly 55 years, to a day, had elapsed, since he first preached from "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life"; and two days before he departed to be with Christ, he was at a funeral, and preached to a crowd, as we have seen, Jesus and the resurrection and His coming, and showed from Scripture the ground of divinely given assurance as to the certainty of eternal salvation; so that up to his last day on earth he was occupied in preaching, or in writing for the press, the same precious gospel.

Extracts from His Last Paper

It is well to remember that Jesus in these days, is the same Jesus as in those days described in Mark 8. Let us see what He was then, so that we may know a little better what He is now; and what He would have us to be now as His representatives on earth . . . "The multitude being very great, and having nothing to eat." Is not this a fact now? . . . But mark; the starting point is, "Jesus called his disciples unto him." What a question this would be to every preacher in this land. Have you heard the call of Jesus? Have you come unto Him? Do you know Him? You cannot be a river of water, if you have not come and drank yourself. If you do not know Him, you cannot break the bread of life to others. If you do not know your sins are forgiven, you will not be able, in faith, to preach forgiveness to others. If you do not know Him, then just come unto Him, He has something to say unto you. He says, as it were, "I want to tell you how I feel about those millions of lost souls in that world where you at present dwell. I have compassion on the multitude. I have been offered up a propitiation on the cross. I freely offered up myself the sacrifice. I am the mercy-seat. God my Father is just and righteous in sending a free pardon to those millions, and you have never told them. You have never made the proclamation of forgiveness of sins in my name to millions within your reach. I have compassion on the multitude.'

There was a large company that had been with Him three days, and He says, "have nothing to eat." And all around are great numbers of readers of this paper, multitudes of professors around Jesus, very busy in religious activities, but they have nothing to eat. They have sacraments and outward services, periodicals and religious books, and still they may have nothing to eat. They are unconverted, are in their sins, guilty before God, hastening on to judgment. And literally, no real gospel has been set before them, suited to lost, guilty, hell deserving sinners . . . Is it so, dear reader? Is your house very far from Jesus? Is Jesus known in your house? Is the holy perfume of His dear presence there? If a stranger comes to your house, does he feel that Christ reigns there? Or is it mere Sunday profession with you, and Satan and his world all the week? . . . But Jesus has compassion on you; He knows how it will end with you if you are not saved. When your heart shall cease to beat, and there is a hush in your house, and they whisper, He is gone; but, oh where? Will you have refused the compassion of Christ until it is too late? Where will you be? Will it be to lift up your eyes in torment? What a mercy it is, as you read this paper, that it is not yet too late. Think then, of the compassion of Jesus . . .

He took the seven loaves, and gave thanks, and brake, and gave to his disciples to set before them; and they did set

them before the people. And they had a few small fishes, and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them." The disciples gave nothing, except what they had received. May it ever be so with us! It is most cheering to hear of, souls, in so many distant lands, being brought to sit at His feet; to sit down and rest in His dear presence, to prove His tender compassion; and then themselves to be the distributors of the bread of life. It will be so everywhere if there is fellowship with Him in His compassion for lost souls. Oh, my brethren, where should we have been but for His compassion on us? He has mercy on whom He will have mercy.

"And they had a few small fishes, and he blessed, and commanded to set them also before them." Have you a few small tracts that contain the true gospel of God? Will you look to Him to bless them? Can you, in faith, obey Him? He commands you to set them before those who have nothing to eat. You have now the privilege of distributing tracts in Japanese, Arabic, Chinese, Chaldaic, and many other languages; will you give them to such as have nothing for the soul to feed upon? . . .

Well, dear reader, have you eaten, and are you filled? If so, you will hunger no more. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35) . . . The believer knows the truth of that word, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). He thirsts no more. He needs nothing more to fit him for the Holiest. He is complete in Christ . . .

Oh, blessed revelation of God, the heart of God, the love of God to a lost and guilty world! Yes, Jesus says, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." May this be true of all who read these lines -- "We all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

His Last Lord's Day

Little did any one think that that Saturday night would be his last night on earth. From what he said, it was evidently, to him, a night of deep exercise of soul before the Lord. On rising and taking his usual Scripture reading alone before breakfast, he turned to Psalms 39, and was so impressed with it, that, instead of reading in the family in the usual course, he read this Psalm again with his dear wife. At the accustomed time, they both went to the Lord's Day morning meeting, in the course of which he said, "Let us give thanks." He thanked the Lord Jesus above all for His death, that marvelous outflow of divine grace, and that we were privileged to be there to remember Him, and announce His death on earth once more. The death of a beloved brother a few days before, was evidently on the minds of several present, and to it he seems to have alluded when he said something like this, "Thou, Lord Jesus, art removing Thy dear saints one by one, but Thou art soon coming to take us all away together to be for ever with Thyself."

On returning to his house, he walked a little in the garden, seemed happy and cheerful. At the usual time he sat down to dine, not in his accustomed place, but very near his dear wife, and shortly afterwards he rose and went to the door for a moment; but

immediately after resuming his seat, he put out his arm upon the table toward Mrs. S., his head sank upon his arm, and when his dear wife reached his side, he had departed to be with Christ.

"His spirit had fled,
Painless and swift as his own desire;
The soul undressed -- from her mortal vest,
Stepped into the car of heavenly fire,
And proved how bright were the realms of light
Bursting at once upon the sight."

To us, scarcely anything could be more sudden, or unexpected, for during the last few days he had seemed to be improving in bodily health. Still "he was not, for the Lord took him." One said, "It was almost a translation." Another said, "It reminded him of the chariot of fire and horses of fire that carried Elijah into heaven." It was, however, so instantaneous, that he seems to have been one moment speaking to his dear wife, and the next moment with the Lord. His last ministry on earth was at the Lord's table, and within two hours he was "with the Lord"-- absent from the body, and present with the Lord." This is how Scripture puts it; and most blessed it is to know that the Christian in his new nature, the new creation in Christ Jesus, leaves the earthly tabernacle to be "present with the Lord." Such is death to the child of God. He was spared bodily pain, and a lingering illness on a bed of sickness, which many have; and the Lord's words seemed to be fulfilled in him, "If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." Happy those who, when consciously departing, are so looking off unto Jesus who saved them by the blood of His cross, that they do not see death. He was absent from the body, and present with his Lord, whom he had so long been constrained by His love to serve. His 69th birthday, as we have remarked, had been some days before.

Soon after his departure, a paper, written on his 47th birthday, came to hand. It had been deposited by him in a secret drawer of his business desk. It was this: "Lord, Thou knowest how long before I shall see Thee as Thou art. I shall be satisfied when I awake in Thy likeness. Let my few remaining moments be spent with Thee and for Thee, my own precious Lord. All is well, Lord, for my times are in Thy hand." It was dated 10th of March, 1868.

The Funeral

The burial took place on Thursday, April 3rd. Long before the arrival of the corpse and the procession of mourners, some hundreds had assembled in the Meeting Room in Moorgate Road, mostly saints from various places, who had long known and loved the dear departed one, and there waited in solemn silence.

After the coffin, which was borne by beloved brethren, had been quietly deposited among us, and the bereaved and their friends had taken their places, a brother prayed. Reverently approaching God, our God and Father, as a company of mourners, all feeling more or less bereaved and sensible of our loss, we could not but give thanks to Him for the grace and strength that had been given to our dear departed brother for such a long series of years in the ministry of His gospel to sinners, and His word of instruction to His saints; and also for the unshaken confidence which we have of his being now "with the Lord." Fervent prayer

was offered for the beloved widow, and for every member of the family; and also that all present might be in the position of waiting on God to learn the lessons He is now seeking to teach by the present sorrow and bereavement.

After this, five words were read from Acts 10:36, "He is Lord of all." In remarking on this portion of God's word, it was said,

Perhaps no five words could be found within the whole compass of divine revelation which have a more searching, more personal, or more suitable application to every one present on this solemn occasion than those just read. They bring the Savior before us as He now is on the throne of God, and reveal Him as the supreme and universal Lord -- "He is Lord of all."

He was here in lowliness and grace, and full of compassion toward men, "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; but now

"The throne is His, and His by right,
The highest place in heaven."

No doubt, as being the eternal Son by whom the worlds were made, as One who was before all things, the Maker of all things, Upholder of all things, the One by whom all things consist, and who is Heir of all things; the One too, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; He could rightfully lay claim in virtue of His Deity to all things. But "He is Lord of all" as having justly merited it by "the death of the cross." In that finished work, there was not only eternal redemption accomplished for us in infinite mercy, but there was what He did for God, and the eternal glory that it brought to Him. Man had sinned, disbelieved God, dishonored God, turned his back upon God, was without God, and consequently without hope in the world: but Jesus came into this sin-stricken, God-dishonoring world of which the devil is prince and god, and with everything against Him, and the opposition of Jews and Gentiles, He obeyed God, honored God, vindicated God, fulfilled His word, did His will in all things, was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. If Adam, when he sinned, deserved to be thrust out of the garden -- the paradise on earth -- what did the God-man Christ Jesus merit for such a glorious work as He accomplished when He had fulfilled all Scripture, and said, "It is finished," and, in obedience to God and love to us, bowed His head in death? Surely nothing less than the glory of God. Therefore, we now see Him "crowned with glory and honor." And that glory which has been given to Him as the glorified Man, blessed be His name, He has given to us. He said to His Father,

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word . . . And the glory which thou hast given me, I have given them (John 17: 4, 5, 20, 22).

By the Prince of Life going into death, the Holy One bearing the judgment due to us and rising out of it, He not only abolished death, and rendered null him that had the power of death, that is the devil, but all power in heaven and in earth was given to Him -- power over all the living and all the dead. Hence we are told, "To this end Christ both died, and

rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living" (Rom. 14:9). In the place then of universal authority, the Head of all principality and power, the risen, ascended, glorified Man Christ Jesus, He has absolute lordship over every human being whether living or dead. Having died for all, having sent the gospel to all, having been long-suffering to all, He is now at God's right hand "Lord of all." There God righteously set Him. He was obedient unto death, even the, death of the cross; wherefore [mark well this word *wherefore*], God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things [or beings] in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth [that is the infernal regions], and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:8-11).

We know from Scripture that the created beings in heaven bow to Jesus as Lord, "angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him." But on earth, this earth on which we are to-day, who bows to Jesus? Who owns Him as his Lord? Who looks up to Him every now and then and says, My Savior, and Lord? Such only as have taken their true place before God as sinners justly exposed to His condemnation, and gladly receive the assurance of His unalterable word, that the blood of Christ, who is now Lord of all, was shed for many for the remission of sins.

Yet God will have Jesus owned as Lord, and confessed by every human being.

It is evident then from the word of God that every one here to-day will sooner or later have to do with Jesus as "Lord of all." Those who bow to Him now as sinners to save them from the wrath to come, will find Him a present Savior; but if they refuse Him now as Savior, they must meet Him as Judge. When He comes out of heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire it will be not to save but to judge the living, and to put all enemies under His feet. But more than that, He is, as we have seen, Lord of the dead as well as of the living. We read, therefore, that "All that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28, 29). What an amazing contrast are these two resurrections! Blessed for evermore are those who will be in the first resurrection!

Therefore in taking the body of the dear departed one to the grave, we do so with the fullest confidence that he is now absent from the body and present with the Lord; and are assured that He who is "Lord of the dead" "will watch over that body (for the body of the believer is the purchase of the Savior's blood as well as the soul, so that such can say He loved me and gave Himself for me), and by and by bring it forth, changed like unto His own body of glory, and take it up, re-united to the spirit, to meet Him in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord. We expect then to see our beloved brother again. On the authority of Holy Scripture we look to be caught up with him to meet our Lord in the air, but "the dead in Christ will rise first." Happy, indeed, and safe for ever, too, are those who now look up by faith at the Lord Jesus Christ where He is, and trust Him as their own Savior; and such will not only say "My Lord, and my God," but will rejoice in the fact that "He is Lord of all."

After these remarks, a servant of the Lord, now on his way to New Zealand, gave thanks to God for the blessing the departed

had been, under God, to so many souls, and the hundreds of times some there present had been cheered by his Christian ways and words. Earnest prayer was offered that by his many writings he though dead might yet speak. Seeing also that his removal was a loss to the world as to the ministry of the Gospel, a loss to the Church also, there was fervent supplication to God to raise up others to fill up the blank occasioned by his departure.

The following verses were then sung:

“O happy morn the Lord will come,
And take His waiting people home,
Beyond the reach of care;
Where guilt and sin are all unknown
The Lord will come and claim His own,
And place them with Him on His throne,
The glory bright to share.

“The resurrection morn will break,
And every sleeping saint awake,
Brought forth in light again;
O morn, too bright for mortal eyes!
When all the ransomed Church shall rise,
And, wing their way to yonder skies
Called up with Christ to reign.”

At the grave, where it has been said that 700 or 800 persons were assembled, the latter part of the 4th chapter of the first epistle to the Thessalonians was read.

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Dr. D. prayed that we might have grace and strength supplied to serve and honor our Lord while waiting for His coming. He thanked God also for the long-continued service of our departed brother, and that his beaming face, when mentioning the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, showed how precious to His servant He was; and that with confidence and peace we placed the body in the grave until the Lord comes.

A few words of prayer were added by another for God's blessing on His truth to those who had heard it that day, and again commending the bereaved and sorrowing at this time to the mercy of God, the meeting separated.

Before laying aside this paper, it would be well, perhaps, for both the Christian reader and writer to inquire, How much are we enjoying the Father's perfect love, and how far are we, living and acting as those who watch and wait for the coming of our Lord?

The great snare for Christians to-day is worldly-mindedness, notwithstanding it is so plainly written that “whoever will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). But when the Father's love fills our hearts, we become lifted above the

attractions and snares which we could not otherwise escape. “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him”; he is not enjoying this sweet relationship, he does not realize that the Father loves him as He loved His Son (1 John 2:15; 17:26).

It is also clear, that if we are truly looking for the coming of our Lord, it will separate us from what dishonors Him, for “every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

May we then enjoy our Father's perfect love, walk in obedience to His word, be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and waiting for His return from heaven! Such are ready when the Master calls!

H. H. S.

June, 1890.

Articles from Things New and Old

Deliverance

It is a fact obvious, of course, to all, that when a Christian dies and goes to heaven he is completely delivered from the power of sin. It is manifestly impossible that sin can have any power or authority over a dead man. But then it is not so readily seen or admitted that the believer, even now, is as thoroughly delivered from the power of sin as though he were dead and gone to heaven. Sin has no more dominion over a Christian than over a man who is actually dead and buried.

We speak of the *power* of sin; not of its *presence*. Let the reader carefully note this. There is as regards the question of sin this material difference between a Christian here and hereafter. Here he is delivered only from the power of sin; hereafter, he will be freed from its presence. In his present condition sin *dwells* in him; but it is not to *reign*. By-and-by, it will not even dwell. The reign of sin is over and gone. The reign of grace has begun.

Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace {Rom. 6:14}.

And, be it carefully observed, the apostle is not speaking, in Rom. 6, of the forgiveness of *sins*. This he treats in Rom. 3. Blessed be God, our sins are all forgiven -- blotted out -- eternally cancelled. But, in Rom. 6, the theme is not forgiveness of sins, but complete deliverance from *sin* as a ruling power or principle.

How do we obtain this immense boon? By death. We have died to sin -- died in the death of Christ. Is this true of every believer? Yes, of every believer beneath the canopy of heaven. Is it not a matter of attainment? By no means. It belongs to every child of God, every true believer. It is the common standing of all. Blessed, holy standing! All praise to Him who has earned it for us, and brought us into it. We live under the glorious reign of grace --

grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord {see Rom. 5:21}.

This enfranchising truth is little understood by the Lord's people. Very few, comparatively, get beyond the forgiveness of sins, if they have even got so far. They do not see their full deliverance from the power of sin. They feel its pressure, and arguing from their painful feeling instead of reckoning themselves to be what God tells them they are, they are plunged in doubt and fear as to their conversion. They are occupied with their own inward self-consciousness instead of with Christ. They are looking at their *state* in order to get peace and comfort, and hence they are, and must be, miserable. We shall never get peace if we seek it in our spiritual state or condition. The way to get peace is to believe that we died with Christ, were buried with Him, were raised with Him, are justified in Him, accepted in Him. In short that,

As he is, so are we in this world {1 John 4:17}.

This is the solid basis of peace. And not only so, but it is the only divine secret of a holy life. We are dead to sin. We are not called to make ourselves dead. We are so in Christ. A monk, an ascetic, or an ardent striver after sinless perfection, may try to put sin to death by various bodily exercises. What is the inevitable result? Misery. Yes, misery in proportion to the earnestness. How different is Christianity! We start with the blessed knowledge that we are dead to sin; and in the blessed faith of this, we

mortify

not the body, but its

deeds {Rom. 8:13}.

May the reader enter, by faith, into the power of this full "deliverance!"

Things New And Old 18:304-306.

Present Forgiveness of Sins

Perhaps no doctrine is more clearly and more repeatedly set forth in scripture, than that God is now forgiving sins, and that those who are forgiven are entitled to know it for present peace and comfort. When consciences are awakened, (and oh, that many more were awakened!) the certain knowledge of having sinned against God, with its indescribable sense of guilt, and the fear of death and judgment, plunges the soul into the bitterest anguish and distress. To such nothing can give peace, but the certain and unquestionable assurance -- not from man, but from God Himself -- that all their sins have been blotted out, and this so completely, that they will never be remembered again (Heb. 10:17). How gracious of God to give such solid assurance!

There is, however, a vague idea in the minds of many on this vitally momentous point. They say, "It is impossible to know that our sins are forgiven till we come to die, or till the day of judgment." But nothing can be more opposed to the truth of scripture. Did Jesus say to the helpless paralytic man, Your sins shall be forgiven you when you are on a death-bed? Certainly not. But He did say,

Son, be of good cheer, thy sins *are* forgiven thee
(Luke 5:20).

Did the Savior say to the sin-convicted woman that fell at His feet in the Pharisee's house, "You cannot know that your sins are really forgiven till you are near death, or till the day of judgment"? Most certainly not. Quite the contrary. He said to the woman,

Thy *sins* are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee; Go in peace
(Luke 7:48-50).

Again, did the apostles preach present forgiveness and justification, or only to be known in the future? Let us hear what Paul preached at Antioch.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Christ Jesus] *is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins*: and by him all that believe ARE justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:38, 39).

No further evidence, surely, is needed to show the scripture doctrine of present forgiveness of sins. It is now, or never. Jesus said,

If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins
(John 8:24).

And yet, in the face of these and other scriptures, we hear many saying, "I hope I shall have my sins forgiven"; "I hope I shall have everlasting life." Whereas they have not the smallest ground for hope, and for this reason, because God is proclaiming present forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Jesus, to every one that believeth. Therefore, those who believe not, instead of having the slightest ground for hope of pardon and salvation, are habitual rejecters of it. It is a very solemn thought; but thus God speaks in His word --

He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life [forgiveness of sins too, Eph. 1:7]: and he that believeth not the Son [or is

not subject to the Son], shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

Instead, then, of such having ground for saying they hope to be forgiven, and hope to have eternal life, they are, day by day, rejecters of these very blessings, and are exposing themselves to the abiding wrath of God. Nothing, then, can be more delusive, more fatal, more opposed to the infallible word of God, than the notion that men may hope for forgiveness at some future time. Were the Lord Jesus to descend from heaven with a shout this day, it would be joyfully found by many that

they that are Christ's at his coming {1 Cor. 15:23}
are

caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air {1 Thess. 4:17};
but, with intolerable misery, it would be found by others that they are left behind, and exposed to divine wrath.

"Confession" and "absolution" are words frequently heard in these days; but, alas! with what fatal error. As to confession to men, scripture says,

Confess your faults one to another,
-- observe, not to an official person, but

one to another, and pray one for another {James 5:16}.

Now this certainly implies that the most gifted in the church of God may confess his faults to the feeblest in the faith, with the view of securing their prayers for his blessing; besides, the context shows that the emphasis is on prayer. Again, we say, observe, there is nothing official here. It is really unaccountable how scripture should be so frightfully perverted, that men should be sometimes found who pronounce "absolution" of the sins of their fellow-sinners in an eternally saving sense. Confession of sins to God is an entirely different thing. We read of one who said,

I acknowledged my sin unto *thee*, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgressions *unto the Lord*; and *thou* forgavest the iniquity of my sin (Psa. 32:5).

And again,

If we confess our sins, HE is faithful and just to forgive us our sins (1 John 1:9).

It is God who pronounces remission of sins to everyone that believeth in Jesus. It is God that justifieth. It is God who pardons, and restores the souls of His erring children, on confession to Him.

If it be said, "The church teaches these popular doctrines of confession and absolution," the reply is, "We read nothing in scripture of the church teaching, but the very opposite, that the church is taught, that the Lord has given teachers to teach those who form the church, the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11, 12). It is quite true that an apostle, though not even his delegate; and also an assembly of two or three gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus -- a company of disciples, not of apostles, received authority from the Lord to bind or loose, to remit or retain sins, but this certainly only in an administrative character, or in the way of discipline, and never in the sense of eternal salvation. (Compare

Matt. 16:19, 18:15-20; 1 Tim. 1:20; John 20:20-23; 1 Cor. 5:4-13; 2 Cor. 2:5-8).

Throughout the scriptures God is revealed as a sin-hating and sinner-forgiving God. All the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, in their writings, testify of this. What was in former times foreshadowed in the sacrifices of bulls and goats, has, in the end of the ages, been fully substantiated by the one offering of Christ Himself. The clothing of our first parents with

coats of skins {Gen. 3:21};

Abel obtaining witness that he was righteous, by the more excellent sacrifice of the firstling of the flock; the blessings which followed Noah's offering of the clean beasts and fowls; the sacrifice, in figure, of Abraham's only-begotten son; the safety given by the blood of the paschal lamb; the cleansing of the leper by blood; the atonement of Israel's sins by the blood of the sacrifice carried within the veil; and the various daily sacrifices which were continually offered, spoke loudly, yet figuratively, Of Him who was in due time to shed His blood on Calvary, for many, for the remission of sins. The harmonious sound, from first to last, was

Without shedding of blood is no remission (Heb. 9:22; see Lev. 17:11).

Again, we may notice that all through scripture the blessing given was always on the principle of faith. Adam, in a world of death, brought in by his own sin, so believed God, that he called his wife

the mother of all living (Gen. 3:20).

Eve's faith so counted on God to fulfil His word, in providing a Redeemer through her, that when her first son was born, she said,

I have gotten a man from the Lord {Gen. 4:1}.

Abel, we are told, offered his sacrifice

by faith {Heb. 11:4}.

Noah became heir of righteousness by faith.

Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness {Rom. 4:3}.

The passover was kept

through faith {Heb. 11:28}.

The Red Sea was crossed

by faith {Heb. 11:29}.

David described the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying,

Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin (Rom. 4:3-8).

There are many other scriptures which show that God's way of blessing to man as a sinner has always been on the principle of faith. Now, however, faith rests on a finished work, an accomplished redemption; we believe in God that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:24, 25).

In Peter's memorable sermon at Cæsarea, he boldly declared that the universal testimony of the prophets was to remission of sins through faith in our Lord Jesus. After having spoken of the Person, life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and of His being

ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead {Acts 10:42},

he said,

To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43).

Surely nothing can be more unquestionably established by the truth of God, than the present certainty of remission of sins, in virtue of the blood of Jesus, to every one that believeth in Him. God can thus act in righteousness because Christ has once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. So thoroughly has sin been atoned for, and all God's righteous claims met, in the death of His Son, that He righteously raised Him from the dead, and highly exalted Him; and so perfect is the application of the infinite virtue of His work to us, that God can say,

Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 10:17}.

It is to this the Holy Spirit bears witness. Nay, more; sin having been righteously judged, the purposes of love are carried out, and divine grace flows forth with such unhindered blessedness, that God freely gives us life, acceptance, and blessing even now in Christ in heavenly places.

He hath made him sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made [or become] the righteousness of God in him (2 Cor. 5:21; see also New Trans., JND).

Could there possibly be anything more done to assure our hearts, and give certainty as to forgiveness of sins?

And now, dear reader, the solemn and eternally momentous question for you is this -- "Are your sins forgiven?" Do not deceive yourself by saying, "I hope they will be," for you have no authority for so hoping. Neither harbour the delusive idea that it is impossible to know that your sins are forgiven in this life, for have we not seen that God plainly declares in His word who have forgiveness of sins, and who are still in their sins. Do not say, "I will try"; for you cannot obtain remission of sins by trying; but do honestly take your place as a guilty and helpless sinner before God. And if your anxious inquiry is, What can I *do* to have my sins forgiven? we reply, Nothing. You can do nothing but sin, absolutely nothing; neither does God, in the gospel, demand anything from you. On the contrary; knowing, as He does, your utterly unclean condition, and that you are

without strength {Rom. 5:6},

He preaches forgiveness of sins to you, on the principle of faith, entirely on the ground of peace having been made by the death and blood-shedding of His own Son. Do seriously ponder this. Do consider that

without shedding of blood there is no remission {Heb. 9:22},

and that God could not in righteousness forgive you on any other foundation than that Christ hath suffered, for your sins in His own body on the tree. What a soul-comforting truth, and what an abiding ground of confidence!

Before you lay this paper down, we beseech you to turn to Jesus, the sinner's Savior, believe on Him, and have present remission of sins.

Things New and Old 22:57-64.

The Death of the Cross

My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? (Psalm 22:1).

Who can describe the suffering of the Son of God when He poured out His soul unto death? when His sorrowing heart gave forth that bitter cry,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

One apostle had betrayed Him, another had denied Him, and all His disciples had forsaken Him and fled, and now God turned away from Him. Man had been mocking, deriding, spitting upon Him and scourging Him, and had degraded Him to be numbered with malefactors; darkness had covered the whole land for three hours, and now the spotless, perfect Man, Christ Jesus, is forsaken of God, so that He cried out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

There never was such a cry heard before, and never will be again. No one now who could truly say, *my God*, is ever forsaken of Him; and by-and-by, when the lost are for ever forsaken, cast out from the presence of God, no one there will be able truthfully to say, *my God*. The marvel in this cry on Calvary is, that the One who could say, in the perfectness of faith, and love, and truth,

My God,

was forsaken by Him. But so it was, and Spirit-taught souls learn the precious lessons of divine grace which it teaches, bringing present peace, and hope of eternal glory, to all who believe on His name.

As man, He could always say to Jehovah,

Thou art *my God* {Psa. 22:10}.

Though equal with God, the only begotten Son, one with the Father, yet, being found in fashion as a Man, He took a servant's form, and, as the perfect Servant, it was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work. In life, He so abode in communion with the Father, that He could say,

Father . . . I knew that thou hearest me always
{John 11:41, 42};

but in the death of the cross it was,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

David wrote this cry by the Holy Ghost, and thus predicted, a thousand years before its fulfilment, that Messiah in His suffering would say these words; and we find in the gospels they were the very utterance of the Savior when hanging on the cross. Nor does the psalm contemplate them as the expression of any other than He who bare our sins in His own body on the tree. He said of Himself, what none other could say,

I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly {Psa. 22:10}.

Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts {Psa. 22:9}.

Of what other babe than He could such be said, who was born in Bethlehem, of whom the angel Gabriel had said to Mary,

that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God (Luke 1:35)?

Besides, as One who was specially connected with Israel, He said,

Our *Fathers* trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them . . . but I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people {Psa. 22:4-6}.

Thus He felt He had not the common privileges that those among the nation of Israel had been accustomed to have, for He cried, and was heard not. He was forsaken of God.

The Son, who was in the bosom of the Father before the world was, when the fulness of time came, was sent forth, made of a woman;

He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death . . . that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man {see Heb. 2:9}.

He came to save, to redeem, and therefore to die for the ungodly. He glorified the Father on the earth. He finished the work which the Father gave Him to do. His death as a sacrifice for sin was for the glory of God. The good Shepherd, laying down His life for the sheep, was so infinitely perfect, that it was another motive for the Father loving Him; hence He said,

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. . . . This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:17, 18).

The death of the cross stands perfectly alone. It never can be repeated, and, because of its eternal efficacy, will never need to be repeated. No creature can utter the sorrows, or describe the suffering of Golgotha, when Christ

bore the sins of many {see Heb. 9:28}.

In that dreadful hour His soul was

full of troubles {Psa. 88:3},

His strength was dried up like a potsherd, His tongue clave to His jaws; all His bones were out of joint, and His heart was like wax melted in the midst of His bowels. But oh! the deep sorrow of that unutterable agony when God, who sent His own Son, condemned sin in the flesh, so that the suffering One cried out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?
O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent {Psa. 22:1, 2}.

When reproach had broken His loving heart, and the Holy One had been smitten and scourged, His hands and feet pierced; when there was no angel sent to strengthen, no lover or friend to cheer; when the sun was forbidden to light up the scene; when man was mocking and deriding, and Jehovah bruising, putting Him to grief, and forsaking Him; still, it was in the perfectness of faith --

My God, *my God*.

He also justifies Jehovah, and worships, saying,

But thou art *holy*, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel (Psa. 22:3).

The Son only could thus glorify God. No one but the Man that is the Fellow of Jehovah of hosts could thus sheath in His own heart

the uplifted sword of divine vengeance. No one but He who had infinite capacities could drink to the very dregs the cup of God's just judgment of sin. No one but the Rock of ages could endure such waves and billows. Only the Holy One of God could be made sin and a curse for us. The spotless Son of man only could be our Surety {Heb. 7:22}.

None but the Good Shepherd could die for the sheep. None but Jesus, the Son of God, could or would save us. And what a sacrifice! What infinite, what eternal blessedness must flow from the accomplished work of the Son of God,

who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father (Gal. 1:4).

Well has it been said --

"Jesus, bruised and put to shame,
Tells me all Jehovah's name:
God is love, I surely know,
By the Savior's depths of woe."

How wonderful, that the Son, by whom the worlds were made, should bear our sins in His own body on the tree; that the

Prince of life {Acts 3:15}

should be

killed {Acts 3:15};

that the

Just One {Acts 7:52}

should be

numbered with the transgressors {Isa. 53:12},

and yet make

intercession for the transgressors {Isa. 53:12};

that

the Son of the Highest {Luke 1:32}

should go

into the lower parts of the earth {Eph. 4:9};

that

the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father {John 1:18}

should be

taken by wicked hands, crucified, and slain {see Acts 2:23};

that

the Lord of glory {1 Cor. 2:8}

should be found here on earth

nailed to a tree {see Acts 5:30, 10:39};

that Jehovah's righteous Servant, His elect, in whom his soul delighted, should be so abandoned in the extremity of bitterest anguish as to cause Him to cry out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1}

What infinite perfections are clustered together here! What profound lessons of grace, holiness, righteousness, truth, and peace are here given for our learning!

What distress, what pain, what ignominy, what woe, did our adorable Emmanuel pass through, when He suffered for our sins

under the righteous judgment of God! what man, or angel, could grasp or utter the full meaning of such unsearchable sorrow and suffering! No line is long enough to sound its depths! No created space could hold the deep waters that came into His soul. No thought can reach what He must have passed through to satisfy for ever divine justice as to our sins. We are told that

He bore our sins {see Heb. 9:28},

suffered for sins {1 Pet. 3:18},

and

died for our sins according to the scriptures {1 Cor. 15:3};

but what was involved in this sin-atoning work, we believe no creature ever will be able fully to enter into, any more than what is finite can comprehend what is infinite. But we know for our comfort that the cup of full, unmingled judgment due to sin was then drunk; and if the anticipation of it caused Him to

sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground {see Luke 22:44},

what must have been His grief and suffering when

it pleased Jehovah to bruise him {see Isa. 53:10},

and to

make his soul an offering for sin {Isa. 53:10}?

Again, we may inquire, what must have been the magnitude of the work of the cross, when we contemplate some of the results? Did He not love the church, and give Himself for it? Did He not, as Israel's King, die for that nation? Will not creation itself have all its groanings hushed, and be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God in virtue of His death on the cross? Did He not make peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven? And will not the new heaven and new earth, in which righteousness will dwell, be the everlasting witness that Jesus was the Lamb of God who bore away the *sin* of the world?

The death of the cross not only stands alone in its eternal efficacy, but it is matchless in the sorrow and love which met there. No comforters to soothe are in attendance, no hand stretched out to assuage His bitter grief, none to sympathise; and, as He said,

none to help {Psa. 22:11}.

Not a drop of mercy is mingled with the cup of God's just judgment of sin. No compassionate friend relieved His sufferings. He knew all that should come upon Him. He endured the cross. He despised the shame. His whole heart's desire was that the Father might be glorified; for He loved the Father, and He also loved us. Wondrous *love*, yet unutterable *sorrow*! The stern sword of the Lord of hosts was lifted up with inflexible justice, and must be bathed in blood! The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the floodgates of heaven were opened; deep called unto deep; the thunders of Sinai roared; and all the foaming waves of offended justice, all the righteous demands due to sin rolled over the meek, and loving, and obedient Jesus. He is forsaken of God. He dies for the ungodly. The Lamb without spot is slain, to

perfect for ever them that are sanctified {see Heb. 10:14}.

And why was all this suffering? Because Jesus was the Sin-bearer. The glory of God demanded that our sins should be judged. Yes, God must judge sin. He has no other way of dealing with it; nor could He save us unless our sins were judged, for God is just. The righteous God loveth righteousness. Jesus only could bear our sins, because He was perfect man, and without sin. God sent Him to save us, and He willingly came, saying,

Lo, I come to do thy will, O God {Heb. 10:9}.

Having glorified God as man on the earth for more than thirty years, the time came for Him, according to the counsels and grace of God, to be a sacrifice for sin; so God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all. Therefore

He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities {Isa. 53:5},

that by His stripes we might be healed. This is why the perfect, loving Savior was forsaken of God, and this is why He died; for the wages of sin is death, and He died for our sins according to the scriptures. But God raised Him from among the dead, and set Him at His own right hand, where He now is, crowned with glory and honour.

How the contemplation of this unutterable suffering melts our souls! We think of the love, the sorrow, the pain, the shame, the

bruising and forsaking, until the language of our hearts is --

"In His spotless soul's distress,
I perceive *my* guiltiness;
O how vile *my* lost estate,
Since *my* ransom was so great."

Dear reader, Is all this tale of unparalleled love and sorrow nothing to you? Is such grace to sinners of no moment? Does the dolorous cry of the sinner-loving Jesus,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

fail to melt your heart? What! Can you read and hear of such matchless love, and be unmoved? Do you not know, that if you refuse this precious Savior, and His atoning work upon the cross, you will have to be for ever forsaken of God, for ever banished from His blessed presence, for ever under the wrath of God? Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die? for He died to save sinners. He lives in glory, and receives and saves sinners. God waiteth to be gracious. He delighteth in mercy; and, in virtue of the blood of His Son, can righteously save; and every soul that comes to God by Him He will save. Dear reader, why not come now, for He is a just God and a Savior?

Things New and Old 23:151-159.

The Death of The Cross

No. 2

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34).

That Jesus would make

intercession for the transgressors {Isa. 53:12}

was prophesied by Isaiah seven hundred years before its actual fulfilment; as also that He would be so despised and rejected as to be

numbered with the transgressors {Isa. 53:12},

when He,

poured out his soul unto death {Isa. 53:12}.

His perfect patience and unfailing meekness were also foretold; for of Him, on whom Jehovah had laid the iniquity of us all, it was said,

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth {Isa. 53:7}.

Nor was the prophetic testimony silent as to His trial at the judgment-seat of Pilate, His death, and burial; for it is written,

He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death {Isa. 53:8, 9}.

Men who preferred a robber, like Barabbas, to Jesus, so that they all cried out,

Not this man, but Barabbas {John 18:40},

treated the Son of God as if He were a wicked man in crucifying Him between two thieves, and taking Him down from the cross, and burying Him that day, putting Him into

his grave with the wicked {Isa. 53:9};

yet the body of Jesus was laid in the sepulcher of

a rich man {Matt. 27:57},

Joseph of Arimathæa, an honourable counsellor, and a good man and a just.

Not only was it foretold that the Son of man should be crucified, that His hands and His feet should be pierced, but it was also declared that not one of His bones should be broken; though He would say,

all my bones are out of joint (Psa. 22:14).

And so exactly did the fulfilment agree with the prophetic word, that, though the legs of the thieves were broken according to the customary mode, they did it not to Jesus. When they came to Him they found that He was dead already; and this was the reason assigned for not breaking His legs. But God was above all. His purpose must be exactly carried out. His word had gone forth fifteen hundred years before that it should not be, and it was not; though men have no idea that in what they did, or in what they did not, the word of God was being fulfilled. When God declared His mind by Moses about the paschal lamb, which we know was a striking type of the Lamb of God, He said,

Neither shall ye break a bone thereof (Ex. 12:46; Num. 9:12).

Therefore it could not be, for the scripture cannot be broken. The exact fulfilment is thus recorded in John's gospel. The Jews

besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. . . . For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken. And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced (John 19:31-37).

Moses also wrote concerning His burial, and that He would be taken down from the tree on the same day as His crucifixion. Having been made a curse for us,

for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree {Gal. 3:13, see Deut. 21:23},

it was ordered that the body should be buried that same day; which we know was in the case of our Lord literally fulfilled: though the reason assigned for so doing was the preparation of the sabbath, and that sabbath being an high day. The prophet said,

If a man . . . be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day (Deut. 21:22, 23).

John, in his gospel, referring to this, says,

The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate . . . After this Joseph of Arimathæa . . . besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus. . . . Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day (John 19:31-42).

It would be most interesting and profitable, did our limits admit of it, to trace in scripture the prophecies concerning our Lord's person -- the Virgin's Child, Immanuel; His birth at Bethlehem; His life of sorrow and grief; His miracles; His rejection -- the Stone which the builders refused; His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver by one who had eaten bread with Him; His death by crucifixion, with transgressors, but He as an offering for sin; His burial the same day, and laid in a rich man's grave; His resurrection on the first day of the week, "the morrow after the sabbath"; His glorification and session on the right hand of Jehovah; His priestly service; His coming again in judgment, to restore Israel as His own nation, and His reigning on David's throne, when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:9). A consideration of scripture on these points certainly shows how much it abounds with instruction concerning Christ; and the observation of the accuracy with which much has been already fulfilled, warrants us to expect that what remains will have its accomplishment with equal accuracy.

In reference, however, to what is now more immediately before us,

the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8},

we shall find that the more we search the written word prayerfully, and in dependence on the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the more we shall be struck with the minute details it gives us. For instance, in Psalms 22, it was predicted that the people, who would treat Messiah with scorn and mockery when hanging on the tree, would say,

He trusted on Jehovah that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him (see Psalm 22:8).

And in the narration in the gospel of the facts which occurred a thousand years after, we read that those who were beholding Him on the cross, and mocked Him said,

He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God (Matt. 27:43).

How truly scripture is divine truth!

It is well to notice how the perfect fulfilment of what had been written concerning Jesus occupied His heart, notwithstanding all the intensity of the suffering and sorrow of the death of the cross. A verse in Psalm 69 remained to have its accomplishment. We read therefore,

After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth (John 19:28, 29).

This seems to complete the accomplishment of what had been written concerning Him, for we are then told,

When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost (John 19:30).

Again, as we have before observed, He who was

numbered with the transgressors {Isa. 53:12},

and bare the sins of many, was to make

intercession for the transgressors {Isa. 53:12}.

Turning then to the gospel by Luke, we read,

And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father forgive them; for they know not what they do (Luke 23:33, 34)!

No doubt this was partly answered in the gospel being used for the saving of so many Jews at Pentecost, and afterward; but we look for its full answer when

Israel [as a nation] shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit (Isa. 27:6).

In the death of the cross, the love of God was manifested. Types had faintly foreshadowed this love; prophets had alluded to it; Jesus Himself had preached it; but, in the death of the cross, divine love to us came out in all its profound reality.

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9, 10).

God's love to *the world* was thus manifested. He was no longer confining His dealing with the people of Israel, but bringing in that which would have a world-wide significance; and in virtue of the work of propitiation, enable God to proclaim it to every one and to save anyone through grace who has availed himself of the Savior's death as the ground of being reconciled. The love of Christ to the church was also manifested in all its suitability and perfectness; for

Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it {Eph. 5:25}.

Divine love thus came out; so that now

God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

Happy indeed are those who have known and believed the love that God hath to us.

How strange that any one, in the face of such a marvelous work as the death of the cross, should contend for doing something of his own to make peace with God. How sad, too, notwithstanding the clear testimony of the word of God to the

infinite value of Christ's sin-atonement work, that men should imagine that they must add their own duties and religiousness to what Christ has done, in order to make their salvation more secure! If any of our readers talk of *doing* for salvation, we can only say, that good works are the fruits of saving faith, and bring before them the word of God's truth --

By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast (Eph. 2:8, 9).

"You've nought to do, for all is done,
That work's complete which Christ begun
Only on it depend.
You've nought to pay, for all is paid;
Without your help salvation's made,
God is no debtor to your aid,
Christ's work you cannot mend;
Believe on Him your sins were laid,
Then doubt and fear will end."

Things New and Old 23:169-176.

The Death of the Cross

No. 3

Among the many precious lessons which the death of the cross sets before us is the perfectness of Christ's *love to the Father*. He fully carried out the Father's will, glorified Him on the earth in a scene of unparalleled trial, temptation, and rejection; and in this He found delight. So unmoved was the purpose of His heart as to this, that, in the immediate prospect of the cross, He said,

Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.
Father, glorify thy name (John 12:27, 28)!

And again,

That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do (John 14:31).

There was *perfect obedience* in the face of the most terrible pressure of suffering and shame. He went straight on in obedience to the will of Him that sent Him. He surrendered Himself entirely to God. As to His words, He could say,

I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me,
He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak (John 12:49).

In the face of everything hostile, and at all cost, with the loss of everything, even life itself, He was always the obedient One, so that He truly said,

I do always those things that please him (John 8:29).

It is also said of Him,

Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8).

In such a world as this, and such a path, ending in such a death of ignominy, suffering, and judgment of sin, we see *perfect obedience*.

His *faith too* was *perfect*; for, though forsaken of God, not even heard when He cried, not having the privileges of a common Israelite, but

a worm and no man {Psa. 22:6},

He could still say,

My God {Psa. 22:1, 10}.

From the first to the last of the path of dependence He was pleased to take, when He humbled Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, He was the Beginner and Finisher of faith. Under the most trying circumstances of suffering, both of soul and body, forsaken by His own disciples, the Object of men's scorn and hatred, and, more distressing than all to His loving heart, forsaken of His God, whom He had always pleased, still it was

My God.

What profoundly solemn lessons a glance at the perfect ways of Jesus, His entire self-surrender, whole-hearted subjection, perfect love to the Father, perfect obedience to His will, as well as His perfect faith, read to our Souls!

Though He made intercession for the transgressors, yet He was not the less sensitive of their scorn and hatred; but about it all, He poured out His heart to God. Not a disdainful shake of the head but He keenly felt, not a word of mockery but fell painfully on His ear; but in the perfectness of faith He told all out to His God.

When he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:23).

Hence we find among the utterances of His heart when lifted up upon the tree,

All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, . . . Thou art my God from my mother's belly. Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help. Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round. They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; . . . for dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. . . . they look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture (Psa. 22:7-18).

Thus He committed Himself in everything to God. Even the cup, though in drinking it, it might come through men's wicked hands, and Satan's bruising of His heel, He took from the Father's hand; for He said,

The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? {John 18:11}.

And so all through the sorrows of the cross, and suffering of death, His faith, His obedience, His love, all was perfect. Surely He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps. Is it not well to ponder this scene so melting to our hearts, until we are so taken up with Himself now glorified, that we are constrained to live only to serve and honour Him in ways of love, obedience, and faith?

Before God all was perfect. By the death of the cross, the atoning work was done. The Holy One having been made *sin* for us, and having suffered for *sins* all the demands of divine judgment, He was righteously raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of God. So perfectly was the work done, that God could send glad-tidings to every creature to proclaim forgiveness of sins and justification from all things to every one that believeth on Him.

In the death of the cross, then, we see man's dreadful hatred to Christ, his enmity against God, and God's abundant grace to man. Sin is there beheld in all its dire malignity, meeting with the expression of God's perfect abhorrence of it in turning away from His perfect and well-beloved Son, because He was bearing our sins. The righteousness of God is there manifested, not in cutting off the sinner in his sins, but in pouring out the just judgment they deserved on His own spotless Son. The truth of God is established, and all done that the scriptures might be fulfilled. There God was glorified. His holiness, righteousness, love, truth, majesty, all are seen in the Cross is uncompromising excellence. Thus sins are purged, peace made, and man saved.

Jesus really died for our sins, according to the scriptures. This was necessary. Had He stopped a hair's breadth of actual death under the judgment of God for sin, no one could be saved. If He, the Corn of wheat, had not died, He must have been alone. But He did die. He tasted death. Concerning the precious mystery of His death, we are told that He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, and that He was taken by wicked hands, crucified and slain. And yet He truly said,

No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father {John 10:18}.

We also know that when He cried out in deepest sorrow on the tree,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1}.

He also could truly add

Thou hast brought me into the dust of death {Psa. 22:15}.

Oh the matchless glory, and mystery of the death of the cross!

Things New and Old 23:206-211.

The Death of the Cross

No. 4

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him (Romans 6:6).

Not only do we see sins suffered for under divine judgment in the death of Christ, but our

old man

-- the nature that did the sins² -- is also seen there

crucified with him {Rom. 6:6}.

What usually alarms an awakened conscience first, is the knowledge of sins committed; the consciousness of having done those things which are evil in God's sight. And it is usually after souls have known forgiveness of sins that they become aware of having a nature in which nothing good dwells; so that the cry of such is,

In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing
{Rom. 7:18}.

Those who have tasted divine grace, and know from the testimony of God's word that their sins are forgiven, desire to live without sinning, and are taught to hate every budding of evil within. Though they have been comforted by the assurance of forgiveness of sins, they are painfully conscious of self-will, pride, and lust stirring within them, and threatening to come out, if not, in unguarded moments, doing so. But even if it has not been manifest to others, they are painfully aware of unclean and unholy workings within; so that, at times, they are almost ready to fear whether they are saved or not; and like one of old they cry out in deep distress,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:24).

Now it is evident this painful condition of soul is not on account of sins committed, but from the experience he has of himself; he does not therefore thus exclaim about his sins, but about himself; not about what he has done, but what he is.

O wretched *man* that *I am*, who shall deliver *me* from the body of this death?

Not who shall deliver me from my sins, but from

the body of this death,

or

this body of death.

So loathsome is it to the child of God (and only those who are born of God have the consciousness of it), that it seems here to be likened to the ancient practice of a criminal having a dead body chained to him, till, from putrefaction, it dropped off piece by piece. Besides, we do not speak of deliverance from our sins, but of

forgiveness of sins {Eph. 1:7};

neither can we reasonably speak of an evil nature being forgiven, but of our being delivered from it; hence the cry,

Who shall deliver *me*!

Many who have forgiveness of sins and peace with God through the blood of the cross, have not the comfort of deliverance from the body of this death.

This is brought to us by the death of the cross. There He who knew no sin was made sin for us; there He was our Substitute before God; there God condemned sin in the flesh, condemned judicially the nature which did the sin; there our old man has been crucified with him. Precious grace to us! There, as before God, we died with Christ, and in Him risen, God hath given to us eternal life; hence we read,

Ye are dead [or have died], and your life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).

The one, therefore, who feels the sadness and misery of bearing about such an evil nature, looks out of himself in simple faith, and finds deliverance wrought for him by the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus distress is turned into thanksgiving, for he says,

I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:25).

He has deliverance from the burden he had on his soul of a corrupt and evil nature. He sees that his old man has been crucified with Christ; we say he sees it, for faith always sees things from God's stand-point; and he finds three things necessarily result.

1st, That he has a new nature which is born of God, which cannot sin, but serves the law of God; this he calls,

I myself (Rom. 7:25);

and he also carries about with him, as to fact, an evil and loathsome nature, and incapable of improvement, which he calls

the flesh (Rom. 7:25).

2dly, He has given him by divine grace a new standing; the

old man {Rom. 6:6}

so completely gone for faith in the judgment of the cross, a new position given him, life in the Spirit, so that he is spoken of as in the Spirit, or in Christ Jesus.

3rdly, His old Adam-standing so gone, that the Holy-Ghost says,

Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. (See Rom. 8:1-9.)

This new standing is so constantly recognised in scripture, that many of the epistles are addressed to those who are

in Christ Jesus {1 Cor. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; &c.}.

It is then by the death of the cross that we have *deliverance* from the nature which did the sins, as well as purgation of the sins themselves; because there in the person of the Son of God, the

2. {As F. G. Patterson expressed it, the old man and the new man are generic expressions. We do not each of us have an old man. The old man refers to our old standing in Adam as fallen. Our old nature is a nature that is in the soul and has the will under its power. In Rom. 8:3, "sin in the flesh" refers to what we call the old nature.}

judgment of sin and sins was fully poured out, and the whole question for ever settled for the glory of God. Hence.

there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins {Heb. 10:26}.

The sacrifice offered being so perfect, and the work so completely finished, that nothing more will ever be done to atone for sin to God, or to remove guilt from the conscience of the sinner who believes; for God declares that

the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin {1 John 1:7}.

It is well then to receive the divine testimony to the work of Jesus in the death of the cross, not only as to His having borne our sins, suffered for sins, and died for our sins as a sacrifice offered to God; but that also in His crucifixion our old man was crucified, and consequently, in His resurrection from the dead, we are associated in life with Him. We are told therefore,

In whom also ye are [or have been] circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh [not sins off] by the circumcision of Christ {Col. 2:11, see New Trans., JND}.

Thus, as to standing, our old man is gone, so that we are not in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus; and yet, as to fact, the

old man ³

is in us, and we are now enjoined to so judge of ourselves according to God, as to

reckon ourselves to be dead (or to have died) indeed unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord (see Rom. 6:11).

It is because we have died with Christ, have been crucified with Him, that we are never told in scripture to crucify the flesh, or, to crucify ourselves, as is sometimes stated. We do read that

they that are Christ's *have* crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24);

that is, they have accepted Christ crucified as their Substitute, they have put off the old man, and put on the new. But though we are never instructed in the word of God to crucify the flesh, yet, because

the flesh

is in us, we are not only enjoined to have no confidence in it, and to reckon ourselves to have died unto sin, but to mortify, or put to death every budding of evil from this evil source. Because

the flesh

is in us, we are told to

walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh {Gal. 5:16}.

We are to

mortify [or put to death] therefore our *members* which are upon the earth (see Col. 3:5)

such as vile passions, evil lusts, &c., and to

mortify [or put to death] the *deeds* of the body (Rom. 8:13).

Peter (putting it in another form) speaks of

laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, &c. (1 Pet. 2:1).

It is well, then, whenever we look back and remember the death of the cross, to accept thankfully all that God has revealed concerning the marvelous way in which

perfect love {1 John 4:18}

met our need there, in judging and setting aside for ever the nature that did the sins as well as the sins themselves -- the corrupt tree, as well as its corrupt fruit. It is when the soul has received Christ as his Savior, he is entitled to know that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made him free from the law of sin and death. There is liberty here. He is now set free from the *dominion* of sin as well as the *guilt* of it; he is in Christ Jesus. All is of divine grace.

Again, it is by the death of the cross that the links which tied us to the world are for ever snapped. The hatred to Christ manifested in His rejection, and its prevailing cry,

Not this man, but Barabbas {John 18:40},

have disclosed its real state of enmity against God. We cannot now love that great system of men's and Satan's building called "the world," because men hated without a cause our best and dearest Friend; yea, a friend that loveth at all times, and that sticketh closer than a brother. The more the child of God meditates on the Lord's death, the more he enters into the righteous utterances of Jesus,

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee {John 17:25}.

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out {John 12:31}.

What a world it must be to have cast out and cruelly and unjustly put to death the sinner-loving Son of God, its rightful Prince, and to have gone on quietly crying "progress" and "advancement" ever since, with such a prince as Satan; for when Christ was wickedly rejected, Satan was rightly called

the prince of this world.

And not only in this view of "the world" in relation to the Savior's death do we realise that we cannot love that which has thus put such shameful ignominy, and cruel rejection and death on our precious Savior, but still dwelling on the death of the cross, we are made to feel the awful truth, that it must also hate all those who have really identified themselves and their interests with Him. How can it be otherwise? While we boast therefore in the eternal redemption which He has accomplished for us at such a cost, we cannot but feel that, from the first moment we really took sides with Christ, we had new interests, new delights, and new prospects; and that the world, whether looked at politically, commercially, or religiously, died away from our hearts with the divinely-given view we had of

the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}.

Is it any wonder then that one like Paul should have so solemnly exclaimed,

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal. 6:14).

3. {See previous note.}

And further, it is also by the death of the cross that those who have been entangled by the law have died to it, and therefore been delivered from it. Law has nothing to say to a dead man, but it has dominion over a man as long as he liveth. And however he may try to use it as he judges most agreeable or convenient to his own ideas, and call it a rule of life or anything else, it has nothing less to say to any transgressor than curse and death. Hence it is written that as many

as are of the works of the law are under the curse {Gal. 3:10}.

As the law then brings all who are of its works guilty of transgression, and under the curse, how can any be delivered from its just judgment? A man cannot be to Christ sometimes and to the law at others, for it would be like a woman having two husbands, and thus be an adulteress. She must be delivered from the first by death, before she can really be in happy association with Christ the second husband. But the law does not die? This is most true. But you have died to it, and thus deliverance is wrought. In the death of the cross, such see that Christ has redeemed them from the curse of the law being made a curse *for them*. In the death of Christ their Substitute they died, and thus are delivered from the law. As the apostle further saith,

I, through the law am dead [*have died*] to the law, that I might live unto God {Gal. 2:19}.

The law is not dead, but the believer has died with Christ. And to return to the figure of two husbands, being thus freed from the first by death, we can now be married to another. Who is

that? Christ risen, One who is on the other side of death, outside the region of sin, or flesh, or law, or the world. Hence we are sweetly taught,

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God (Rom. 7:4).

How strange that in the face of such plain scripture testimony that many should think that Christ came to help them to save themselves, instead of to save them Himself with such a great and eternal salvation! Many speak of making themselves better, instead of bowing to the divine verdict that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8}.

Others speak of the world's progress and improvement, as if it were gradually becoming fit for God, instead of owning the righteous testimony of Jesus of its being under sentence of judgment; while not a few are flattering themselves that they keep some parts at least of the law, and thus meriting something toward their everlasting security. May God deliver people from these soul-destroying delusions, and, being convicted of their utterly unclean, and thoroughly undone state, may they turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, the alone Savior of sinners, who has made peace through the blood of His cross, and casts out none who come to Him. O to know more of the infinite glory and everlasting value of the death of the cross!

Things New and Old 23:225-233.

The Death of the Cross

No. 5

So must the Son of man be lifted up (John 3:14).

In our former meditations on the death of the cross, we have seen that the believer is viewed by God as

dead with Christ {Col. 2:20}

-- dead to sin, crucified to the world, and dead to the law. The law is not dead, but, in the death of Christ, his Substitute, he is dead to it. He is thus, by the death of Christ, judicially cleared from the guilt of sin, and set free from the dominion of sin. In Christ risen, therefore, he is said to be not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, not of the world even as Christ was not of the world, and not under law, but under grace. The deliverance thus wrought for us through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is perfect and effectual, not only as to removing the burden of our sins, and therefore of guilt; but in rescuing us from this present evil age, and delivering us from the plague of an evil nature whose activities are always contrary to God. Precious deliverance!

It is, however, a point never to be overlooked when contemplating the death of the cross, that there sin is seen in all its exceeding sinfulness. In Eden we see something of the dreadful character of sin, or disobedience, not only in the consequences there enumerated, but in the holiness of God requiring that the man should be driven out of the garden, and not allowed to return.

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life (Gen. 3:14-24).

Again, when six thousand years have well-nigh passed, and the working of sin, and the accumulation of experience, both in Satan and sinners during this long period, have grown into such colossal proportions, so that graveyards, lunatic asylums, hospitals, houses of correction, prisons, are increasingly called for to keep things outwardly bearable, we become almost lost in the immensity of the ravages and growth of sin. And further, if for a moment we take our stand as it were on the margin of the lake of fire, which is the second death, and think of the end of sinners, and of all such as have rejected the Savior, and consider the eternal fulfilment of the words of divine testimony concerning those who will be there, we are led again to say, What a dreadful thing sin is! For

the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

But it is in the Savior's groans, and agonies, forsaking, and blood-shedding in the death of the cross, we see what the exceeding sinfulness of sin really is. No creature could satisfy God's holy requirements concerning it. Neither Michael, nor Gabriel, nor all the shining myriads of angelic hosts around the throne of heaven could make propitiation for the sins of the people. Were the vast universe which was brought into existence by the word of God laid aside, all could not clear man of one sin. Could it be that all of Adam's posterity could give themselves up to weeping and sorrow, still, as before God, it would be true that

"All for sin could not atone
But the blood of Christ alone."

No one but the only-begotten Son of God could make atonement for sin. For that, as He said, the Son of man *must* be lifted up, for He only could accomplish the work and so glorify God. Being man, perfect man, He only could be a fit substitute for man. Being sinless, He could be a fit sacrifice for the sinful; and being a divine Person as well as man, He was competent to meet all the just requirements of God, and satisfy God's righteousness and holiness about sin. If then man sinned, man also suffered for sins, and is the propitiation for sins. If by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. If man was driven out of the garden because of sin, the man Christ Jesus rose from the dead, and entered into heaven itself by His own blood. Who but Jesus, Son of the living God, could do this? How dreadful then sin must be, when we think that it needed One of eternal capacities, and almighty powers, as well as perfect man, to put it out of God's sight. Though thousands of bulls and goats had been offered as sacrifices for sin, God had no pleasure in them; they served to typify the great sacrifice for sin which was coming, but could not righteously remove sin from the eye of God,

for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats
should take away sins {Heb. 10:4}.

It was in love to us, and for the glory of God, That He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all. Being delivered for our offences, we see in the death of the cross what the just judgment of sin is; that sin calls for nothing less than being forsaken, or abandoned by God. Hence we find that though Jesus was perfect in obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, yet He there cried out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (Psa. 22:1).

The holiness of God, and the demands of righteous judgment of sin could be satisfied with nothing less, therefore it is added,

But thou art *holy*, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel
(Psa. 22:2-3).

No person but God's own Son was competent to be a propitiation for sins, and nothing less than the death of the cross could justly put it away from the eye of God. Out of all this we know He rose triumphant. What a dreadful thing sin is!

How then can those escape being cast out from the presence of God into outer darkness, who refuse this great salvation, and die in their sins? How can they ever atone? In an eternity of unending hopelessness, and boundless remorse, into which no ray of hope can ever come, what can exceed this unchanging misery? A guilty conscience ever accusing, the power of an offended God abiding on them, the darkness of banishment from happiness and

light ever continuing, the torment of the remembrance of opportunities of having salvation presented to them in the gospel rejected by such as cherished the love and pleasures of sin, how unutterably painful; but how all the misery of the lost fails to give us an idea of the unfathomable pain and sorrow of

the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}!

How endearing does the revelation of God's thoughts of that marvelous work make the Savior to the hearts of those who believe in His name! What comfort of love flows into our souls when thus contemplating Him who was so willingly made sin for us! How small the greatest events of history look, when compared with the eternally-blessed work of

tho death of the cross.

If God had so to bruise and put to grief His own Son to atone for our sins, how can the sinner and ungodly escape the everlasting wrath of a holy and offended God? Happy those who now so know the reality of

the death of the cross
as to enable them to say

"Inscribed upon the cross we see
In shining letters, 'GOD IS LOVE!'
The Lamb who died upon the tree,
Has brought us mercy from above."

Things New and Old 23:262-266.

The Death of The Cross

No. 6

We had the sentence of death in ourselves (2 Corinthians 1:9).

We are at this moment between the cross and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We look back and remember that He died for our sins, we look up and know Him as our life, we look forward and hope for His coming to receive us unto Himself. Christ is therefore our peace, our life, and our hope.

Though all truth must be practical, yet nothing perhaps is more eminently practical than the death of Christ, as revealed in scripture, in its variety of ways, from Genesis to Revelation. It is by the death of the cross that we have the knowledge of remission of sins, the comfort of a purged conscience, and peace with God; and such consciousness of divine favour as enables us to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is reconciliation by the death of His Son which removes fear, and inspires us with confidence to live unto God. Being sanctified by the blood of Jesus, we are taught to walk through this scene as those who are set apart by God, and perfected for ever by that one offering. It is by the blood of Jesus we have liberty at all times to enter into the holiest, and to abide there, because He has entered into heaven itself by His own blood. It is because our old man is crucified with Christ that we have deliverance from ourselves, and are set free from the dominion of sin, as well as from its guilt and power. This being so, how can it be otherwise than that we should have the sentence of death in ourselves? How can we put confidence in that which God has judicially set aside? Hence the apostle Paul, when alluding to a special trial connected with his ministerial experiences, speaks of being

pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust he will yet deliver us (2 Cor. 1:8-10).

While doubtless the apostle is here referring to a particular trial in connection with his service in the gospel, yet the principle is the same as to every child of God, that, because he has been judicially set aside in the cross of Christ as to his first Adam standing, he cannot now put confidence in that which God has thus judged. Taught also by the Spirit of God that in him, that is in his flesh dwelleth no good thing, and accepting gladly in faith the judgment of God as crucified with Christ, how can he but have the sentence of death in himself? If we have believed God as to the reality of the truth that we have now no standing before Him

in the flesh {Rom. 8:10},

but

in Christ Jesus {Gal. 3:26, 28},

who is risen and ascended, how can we but have

the sentence of death in ourselves {2 Cor. 1:9}?

Thus, having died with Christ, and being alive in Him risen, how can we have confidence in that which has thus been judicially set aside by God in the death of the cross?

In this way we are delivered from self-confidence. This form of false reliance was the cause of Peter's denial of Christ. He meant well no doubt, and was sincere, when he said,

I will lay down my life for thy sake {John 13:37};

but he did not know himself, he was trusting in himself, and had painfully to learn the folly of it, and its Christ-dishonouring result. It is perhaps one of the commonest causes of failure with us now. It is evident that some who have accepted the truth of being lost sinners, and have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, have not accepted a further truth that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8},

and therefore that

the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God {1 Cor. 2:14};

and thus they have not so learnt the death of the cross as to have the sentence of death in themselves, and therefore are not delivered from self-dependence and self-confidence. For the things of time and sense, no one questions the value of natural ability; but

the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God {1 Cor. 2:11}.

To bring in, therefore, human competency, or self-confidence in divine things, is to deny the setting aside of man in the flesh in the crucifixion of the Son of God, to get away from new creation ground as alive in Christ risen, and as having power by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Though few believers have been called to pass through such trials as the apostle Paul, yet all children of God are entitled to say we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.

This lesson then of such deep practical moment, presented to us in the death of the cross, teaches us to have no confidence in the flesh, but to deny self, and confide in Another; and this too not only on great occasions, as we say, but as the constant rule of our lives. This has always been the way of faith, though not known so clearly and fully before the coming of the Holy Spirit consequent upon the accomplished redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. We read that Abraham

considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform (Rom. 4:19-21).

He relied upon the power of God, and not on himself. He judged God faithful who had promised; and therefore he was honoured of God. Again, when offering up Isaac, we are told that he reckoned only on God,

accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure {Heb. 11:19}.

Whether then the path of a child of God be rough or smooth, painful or pleasant; whether the matter in hand be great or small, his privilege is to connect God with all according to His word, and act in faith about all for His glory. By the death of the cross then we are taught that we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. The death and resurrection of Christ are thus to be constantly before our souls. In His death, we learn not only the divine estimate of our thorough good-for-nothingness as belonging to the first Adam, but we also see the manifestation of divine, perfect love; for even when we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We see the depths of grace meeting us in our worst and lowest estate and loving us perfectly. Jesus said to the Father,

I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them (John 17:26).

Thus the love of the Father to the Son is the measure of His love to us. In the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from among the dead we see the greatness of His power which is to usward. The apostle prayed that the Ephesian saints might know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when

he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, &c. (Eph. 1:19, 20).

Thus the two things to comfort our souls under all circumstances, are, that the Father's love to us is perfect, that it cannot be more and never will be less, and that the power of God that works for us and in us is the power which raised Christ from among the dead. We cannot therefore be in circumstances beyond the circle of divine love, or where divine power cannot reach us. Having then the sentence of death in ourselves, only casts us upon that which is infinitely higher and better, even to trust in God who raiseth the dead.

It is then when studying the death of the cross, that we learn to have a proper estimate of ourselves and of other matters, according to the mind of God. There we see the history of the first man -- man in the flesh -- closed. It tells us that when *last of all* God sent His Son, saying, They will reverence my Son, men proved themselves to be so incorrigibly bad, that they said,

This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him {Matt. 21:38}.

But it also tells us of the aboundings of divine grace in not only judicially setting aside the old man, and taking away sins, but also in Him risen and ascended giving us eternal life, creating us anew in Him, making, us to stand in Him in divine favour, and enabling us by the gift of the Holy Ghost to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The practical effect of

the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}

seemed to have had constant power on the apostle. Hence we find him again saying,

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 (2 Cor. 4:10).

If the sentence of death within, leading saints not to trust in themselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, characterised their *state*, their *testimony* was, that, while in a mortal body, and passing through this sin-stricken scene, they willingly took the place of rejection, by identifying themselves with Him whom the world despised, hated, and cruelly put to death. This they felt to be their true position, and this, not sometimes, but *always* --

always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus {2 Cor. 4:10};

never forgetting that He was once here, but is not here now. Every day we have sorrowfully to feel that we are in a world where He was, and is not, and where He is still hated and despised. We may sometimes find a widow who makes us feel the sorrowful and lonely character of her path, without her alluding to it, for her ways and spirit show that her heart constantly thinks of one who was her all, who was here, but is not now. We once heard of a son who could not return to the family mansion of the estate he inherited, because his father had been murdered in it. But these illustrations fail to set forth the experience of those who are bearing about in their body the dying of Jesus. While one part of our testimony is waiting for God's Son from heaven with girded loins and trimmed lamps, and faithfully occupying the place of service till He come, it certainly must be founded, not only on the knowledge of accomplished redemption, but in the consciousness of being identified with Him whom men cast out and crucified.

This is the place, not for unfaithfully sharing the world's pleasures, but for bearing the dying of Jesus about in our body. In the glory we shall be with Him, and like Him, and be where there is no more sorrow nor death; not so here, where divine judgment is coming because men showed hatred to Jesus for His love. It is this identification with Christ in rejection which is so sweet to Him, and which brings us into suffering, loss, and the place of reproach. Would that we knew it better. It may be a line of truth which is much lost sight of. When really adopted, it must lead us into a path of holy separation with Him. How can the death of Jesus, when known in power in our souls, lead us otherwise than in the path of identification with Him in His rejection? If He suffered

without the gate {Heb. 13:12},

how can the way of faith in this evil time be otherwise than going forth

unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach {Heb. 13:13}?

May He strengthen us for this!

Things New and Old 23:281-288.

The Death of the Cross

No. 7

Our blessed Lord the Faithful and True Witness, found no rest here, had not where to lay His head, and His path of perfect obedience to the will of God led only to death, even the death of the cross; is it, then, strange that the faithful now so constantly prove this to be a region of disappointment to natural expectations, and that those who are obedient to the word of God should find the path so frequently one of death and resurrection? Has it not been the case all through this sin-stricken time? Did not God promise Abram a son? And did not year after year pass, till all human hope of its fulfilment had gone? But Abram proved the faithfulness of Him who raiseth the dead. Again, when the great apostle of the Gentiles had sure guidance for taking the gospel into Europe, did he find the path smooth and easy, according to human calculation? Far from it. He and Silas soon found the cruel thongs scourging their backs, and the hours of midnight passing while their feet were made fast in the stocks of an inner prison; but, with aching limbs, they prayed and sang praises to God, because they knew that the divinely-ordered path in a world of evil must be one of death and resurrection. We know what abundant streams of blessing afterwards accompanied their ministry. Is it, then, to be wondered at that we find the inspired apostle saying,

We which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4:11)?

The death of the cross is also set before us in scripture to encourage our confidence in God in faith and prayer

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Rom. 8:32).

Again, while contemplating Him who trod the path of faith perfectly, and resisted unto blood, striving against sin -- the Beginner and Finisher of faith -- we are directed to Him who is now on the throne for sustainment, and are assured that His grace is sufficient for us. We may also learn the secret of turning the bitter we find in the wilderness into sweet, by associating it with the death of the cross in all its perfectness and grace; and, compared with His sorrows, we learn to speak of our heaviest trials as

light affliction {2 Cor. 4:17}.

It is not to be wondered at that efforts have, every now and then, been put forth by our adversaries, to undermine the doctrine of the cross, seeing how infinitely He there glorified God, and that all our blessings are founded on it. This has sometimes been done by going back to principles of Judaism, or by the Galatian error of appending something supplemental to the work of Christ for security; or, at other times, by attacking the personal glory of the Savior, and thereby invalidating the infinite and eternal value of His finished work. Well has it been said long ago,

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? {Psa. 11:3}.

With the spiritually-minded, the true doctrine of the cross is never lost sight of, and that, not only because all our blessings are founded on it, but because of the full outflow of divine love to us there manifested, even when we were yet sinners, and the infinite perfections which there so wondrously culminated. In the apostles' writings, we cannot fail to notice how frequently their inspired thoughts recur to the death of the cross, and this sometimes again and again within the compass of a few verses. And, in days of old, when God was speaking by types and shadows, how constantly the many sacrifices remind us of the one sacrifice of the death of Christ; and so in the last writer of holy scripture, when the Apocalyptic visions are brought before us, the Lamb is most conspicuously set forth every here and there.

While nothing is more clearly taught in scripture than the secret of our strength, blessing, and growth in grace being connected with our having personally to do with Christ in glory, in contrast with the mistaken doctrine of being always at the foot of the cross, yet is it possible to be beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and be thus changed into the same image from glory to glory, without remembering the death of the cross as the way by which He reached the throne of glory?

The death of the cross is therefore never to be forgotten by us, but to be had in constant remembrance till Jesus comes. The Lord's supper tells us this. In it, it is Himself we remember; His death we announce. Not, as we sometimes hear, that in it we "remember his death," but we remember *Him*. He said,

This do in remembrance of me {Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24}.

We *see* Him by faith now crowned with glory and honour, but we *remember* Him in death for us on the cross. It is Himself we remember, the One who loved us, and gave Himself for us; and this is to be continued

till he come {1 Cor. 11:26}.

Oh, the unspeakable wonders and blessedness of

the death of the cross!

Things New and Old 23:318-321.

Before Death, and After Death

They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them (Luke 16:29).

In our Lord's words concerning the rich man and Lazarus, He brings before us most solemn pictures of great realities both before death and after death. With regard to the present time before death, there are three things to be particularly noted -- the man of the world, the believer, and the word of God.

The sketch given of the man of the world is not that of an immoral or malicious person, but of one who has the best he can get to eat and drink and also to put on. More than these things the world cannot give, and his aim is to have the best that it affords for the gratification of his desires.

He was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day {see Luke 16:19}.

Self is the object of his heart, not God; yea; he is

without God in the world {Eph. 2:12}.

But all big comforts are bounded by time and sense. At length the chilly hand of death lays him prostrate, and all his good things are gone, and gone for ever. He dies, and is buried. What is often called "a respectable funeral" is the finishing stroke in the history in time of a man of the world.

The rich man died, and was buried {see Luke 16:22}.

To such death is awfully serious, but what must it be after death? How searching are the Savior's questions!

What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? {Mark 8:36}.

The man of faith, however, though in the world, is little known or noticed by it. His heart's interests lie far beyond what is seen and temporal. Not only does he find nothing here for his soul, but he proves that everything of the world is adverse to it. He is a stranger here. His path is solitary; his sorrows not a few. The waste of those surrounding him, only makes him feel more keenly the poverty and trials of his lot as to this life. But he finds that God is with him, and can turn everything to good account in the most unthought of ways, so that even dogs may give relief by licking his long-neglected sores. He has also learned that it is given unto him in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Phil. 1:29).

Besides the man of present good things and the man of faith, the Lord speaks of the third thing, the possession of the holy scriptures --

they have Moses and the prophets {Luke 16:29}.

Thus the three leading features of what is found in this present world are: the unbeliever with his

good things {Luke 16:25},

the believer with his

evil things {Luke 16:25};

and the word of God, which speaks of eternal things. The Bible is the condemnation and death-warrant of the unbeliever, and the comfort and stay of the believer.

The Lord then lifts the curtain, and shows the amazing contrast in the state of these two men after death. The needy and dependent man of faith no sooner quits his suffering body, and a heartless world, than he is carried by the angels into the bosom of the father of the faithful. He joyfully proves the truth of scripture that

they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham {Gal. 3:9}.

Sweet resting-place. He is now where the wicked cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. He is where righteous Abraham and all departed believers are. How vast the change! Yesterday in suffering at a rich man's gate, worn out with the pain of his many sores, and thankful to have his wounds licked by a passing dog; but to-day his spirit is with the father of the faithful, where all is peace and love. And has it not been truly said that it is far better to depart and be with Christ?

And where is the rich man with all his boasted elegance and luxury, whose burial was only yesterday with such pomp and ceremony? We are told that in hell (or hades -- the place of departed spirits), he lift up his eyes being in torments. No sooner is he there, than he sees the beggar that had sat outside his gate now a long way off, but shut in with Abraham in blessing and rest. How wide the contrast of the state of these souls now; the one in bliss unspeakable, the other in anguish unutterable! Both in hades, the place of departed spirits; but one, like the thief, in paradise with the Lord, while, the other is miserable beyond description. How very solemn, and yet how real the picture! We know that if a believer dies, or rather falls asleep in Jesus, he departs to be with Christ -- to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

But the unbeliever, alas! is in a very different compartment of the place of departed spirits. On quitting the body, he is at once conscious of being shut out from the presence of God, so that his misery is great. His being spoken of as parched with thirst shows the depth of his anguish. How he envies the man now who was once a poor beggar at his gate! Observe, there is no idea of purgatory here. No: it is exactly opposite, and the most perfect exposure of the utter falseness of the doctrine of purgatorial fire. Every one after death tastes misery or blessing. Let the reader carefully note that this is not the eternal state, for then all will have bodies; and that the Lord here contemplates a people on earth still unsaved with the word of God in their hands. Besides, we know from other scriptures, that the wicked will be brought from hades before the great white throne for the sentence of their eternal banishment from the presence of God, and to be deservedly cast (with death and hades) into the lake of fire. Let not the reader fail also to note there is no annihilation here, and no possibility of ever

getting from the place of misery to the place of blessing. When the lost soul prays, as he never did before, saying,

Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said . . . Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence {Luke 16:24-26}.

No language could more clearly show the impassable distance between the saved and lost after death, or the utter impossibility of one who dies in his sins ever being where Christ is. What remains for such is to be brought up at the

great white throne {Rev. 20:11}

at the close of the millennium, when the heavens and the earth will have fled away, and receive the final judgment, and their sentence of banishment to the lake of fire. All that appear there for judgment must be for ever lost, because, having refused salvation by grace, they will be

judged every man according to their works {Rev. 20:13}.

But another most affecting part in this appalling scene after death, is, that the lost one thinks of his relatives still living on the earth. He implores Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house,

for,

said he,

I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment {Luke 16:28}.

The infidel sometimes taunts the Christian, by saying, "We know nothing about what is after death, because no one has ever come back to tell us." But the Savior, who knew all things, has told us. And one thing is clearly made known -- that there will be no infidels after death -- all will be real then. Purple and fine linen are of no value there; even the lost will realise then the priceless worth of souls. If there will be one longing in such after death, it will be that their sinful relations on earth might hear the gospel, believe, and not

come into this place of torment {Luke 16:28}.

But they have the gospel. They possess the Bible which contains it.

They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them {Luke 16:28}.

Observe, it does not say, they have religious teachers, or religious privileges, or duties -- but they have God's word, and their responsibility is to hearken to it. As saith the prophet,

Hear [not do, but *hear*], and your soul shall live {Isa. 55:3}.

As the Savior also said,

He that heareth [not feeleth, or giveth, or doeth, but *heareth*] my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath everlasting life {John 5:24, see New Trans., JND}.

They are to *hear* Moses and the prophets. But says the lost one, if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent {Luke 16:30}.

And Abraham said unto him,

If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead {Luke 16:31}.

How very solemn! But so it is. For faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. No, not even seeing a man rise out of his grave would convert a soul; it must be by hearkening to, and receiving into the heart, the word of God.

They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them {Luke 16:29}.

Now what does Moses say? Does he not by types and shadows, and also by the plainest statements, show that salvation is alone by Christ, and through His precious blood? Does he not plainly say,

It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul {Lev. 17:11}?

Was not the blood of the lamb the only shelter from the judgment of the destroying angel throughout the land of Egypt? Did not Aaron make atonement for the sins of the people by carrying in the blood of the sacrifice, with burning incense, inside the veil? Did not Abel's sacrifice of the firstlings of the flock so plainly set forth the sacrifice of Christ, that we are told that the Lord had respect to Abel and to his offering? And was not Cain rejected because his offering did not set forth the sacrifice of Christ -- a life laid down for others? Again, was not the leper pronounced clean when sprinkled with the blood? We might multiply quotations to show the constant testimony to the infinite value of the one offering of Christ from the books of Moses. Now let us look for a moment at some of the prophets. Harken to Isaiah, who says,

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: . . . and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all. . . . He hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors {Isa. 53:5-12}.

And to show the sin-cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ, the prophet says,

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool {Isa. 1:18},

Again,

I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins {Isa. 44:22}.

Now what figure could more completely show the thorough blotting out of sin, as gone for ever, than that of the cloud; for where is the dark cloud we saw yesterday? Is it not gone, and gone for ever? You will never see it again. As the prophet Jeremiah plainly states,

I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more {Jer. 31:34}.

Again, we hear Isaiah saying,

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins {Isa. 43:25}.

Hezekiah also said,

Thou hast, in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back {Isa. 38:17}.

Another prophet says,

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us (Psa. 103).

In this brief glance we see how clearly and fully Moses and the prophets point out the only way of salvation. It is no marvel, then, that it was said,

They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them!

And now, dear reader, you have not only Moses and the prophets, but the testimony of our Lord Himself also, and of His apostles. You know, too, that One has risen from the dead, has been seen alive again by many infallible proofs, and has commanded that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations. And what effect, dear reader, has all this had on you? Has the word of God, which speaks of the finished work of Christ, persuaded you? Have you heard God's word?

Hear, and your soul shall live {Isa. 55:3}!

God speaks, and Christ has declared that the scripture cannot be broken. You have not wonderful things to see, or marvelous experiences to pass through, or many things to do, in order to be saved; no,

"Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago."

Then hearken to Him who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Let His infallible word, which will never pass away, have its due weight upon your soul! Listen attentively to Him who said that His blood was shed

for many for the remission of sins. Oh think of His sinner-loving heart, who, with open arms, could most touchingly say,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}!

Come then and be saved!

Thank God, dear reader, that you are this side of death, where God's word of forgiveness of sins by Christ sounds on all sides! Thank God you are not where that rich man was crying out for one drop of water to cool his parched tongue! What deep mercy has spared you to the present moment! Do think of this; and also consider what an immeasurable distance there is now between you, a sinner in your sins, and the infinitely holy, sin-hating God. Still His word is that He delighteth in mercy, that He saves sinners to the praise of the glory of His grace. Listen, then, not to your own thoughts, or to the doctrines of men, but to The word of the living and true God.

Hear, and your soul shall live {Isa. 55:3}.

"O, poor sinner, do not doubt,
Christ will never cast you out.
If you come in simple faith,
Just believing what He saith;
If you wish for peace and rest,
You will find it on His breast."

Things New and Old 25:1-10.

Brief Notes on Keeping the Unity of the Spirit

Ephesians 4:3, 4

We are enjoined to be

endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace {Eph. 4:3},

or

to be giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the uniting bond of peace {Eph. 4:3, see New Trans., JND}.

Now what are we to understand by keeping this unity? What is it? Before, however, we look at what it is, it may be well to consider what it is not.

1. Keeping the Spirit's unity is *not merely a congregational union*. There may be considerable oneness of mind and judgment with Christians, who compose a particular congregation, which, after all, may be only independency; or, one congregation choosing to act independently of all other congregations of Christians. The Holy Spirit dwells in, and acts in, the church,⁴ all over the world. There is really nothing between independency and keeping the Spirit's unity.

2. It is *not a sectarian union*, or acting together on a sectarian principle, even if all the saints in the world were on such ground.

3. It is *not a union of sects*, however many of the sects, as sects, were congregated together and acting together.

4. It is *not always proved by unanimity*, however much it is desired; for the Corinthians seem to have been unanimous in keeping in their midst one defiled with flagrant evil; and were evidently not unanimous in putting away from among themselves the

wicked person. (See 2 Cor. 12:20, 21.)

It is not a question of majority, of minority, or of unanimity, but what is the Lord's mind? What is the path marked out by the

One Spirit {Eph. 4:4-6}?

5. It is *not merely union*, even of the best kind; for are not all saints, however erring, for ever in living union with each other and with the Lord?

6. It is *not anything short of unity* -- a unity which can be kept only by those who are members of

One body

of which Christ in heaven is the Head. When we read in Mal. 3:16, 17 of those who

feared the Lord . . . and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels,

4. The word church is used in scripture for the body, as "the church which is his body" (Eph. 1:22); and also for the professing church, or the church looked at on earth as the place of corporate responsibility, as the church of the Laodiceans, the church of God which is at Corinth, &c.

the prophet is speaking of a God-fearing remnant of Jews, not of the members of

one body

-- the assembly. Neither are "fellows" the same as members of one body. Again,

brethren

dwelling

together in unity (Psa. 133:1)

will have its fulfilment in millennial times of Israel's blessing on earth -- a unity of brothers -- not the membership of one body, God's present order of blessing. This the nation of Israel never will be. There is *one* body. The idea of

twelve tribes

is very different from that of

one body. (See Heb. 1:9; Eph. 5:30.)

Now let us consider what keeping the Spirit's unity is.

1. *Saints only can keep it.* Such are exhorted to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called endeavouring to keep it.

2. This unity is to be *kept, not made*. Those who attempt to *make* it show that they do not *keep* the Spirit's unity which has been made.

3. It is not merely *union*, but *unity* --

One new man {Eph. 2:15},

formed of members on earth united to Christ the Head in heaven. So *one*, that Jesus, the glorified Man, could say to a hater of His members on earth,

Why persecutest thou ME? {Acts 9:4}

Observe, not "mine" merely, but

me;

and the Holy Spirit speaks of such *now* as

members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones {Eph. 5:30}.

Again the *unity* is formed and energised, and all the members taught, led, and acted on, by

one Spirit {Eph. 4:4-6}.

The

one bread,

or loaf, on the Lord's Table, shows it to be the Lord's mind that this unity should be expressed

till he come. (See 1 Cor. 10:17.)

It is blessed to know this!

4. It is *of such a spiritual nature* that it can only be kept

with all lowliness and meekness, and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love {Eph. 4:2}.

There is no room for carnal weapons. When this unity is truly kept, it will be in the uniting bond of peace. What a precious bond! Those who are walking proudly and in self-will cannot therefore be keeping this unity.

5. It is *a holy unity*, for the Spirit is

holy {Eph. 4:30}.

Nothing therefore unsuited to Him, who is

the holy and the true {see Rev. 3:7, 6:10},

can be consistent with keeping the Spirit's unity. Separation from evil is therefore imperative. Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity (2 Tim. 2:19).

6. It is *according to the truth*, for

the Spirit is truth {1 John 5:6},

and He guides into all the truth. Keeping the Spirit's unity therefore excludes everything contrary to

the truth {Eph. 4:20, 21}.

7. It is a unity which comprehends nothing less than *every member of the*

one body.

Practically it considers every saint in Christ Jesus, and is associated with all who are endeavouring to keep this unity. It cannot, therefore, be sectarian, however it may appear to be so. Such love all saints, pray for all saints, and would walk with all saints, if they could do so according to the truth.

8. It is the *Spirit's unity* because the path and power of keeping it is by one Spirit all over the world, wherever saints are.

He that hath an ear

is therefore enjoined to

hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches {Rev. 2:7, 11, &c.},

or assemblies. In keeping this holy unity then the action of one Spirit

is recognised, and practically owned, wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus own His presence and the Holy Ghost sent down. Wherever in this way a case has been judged it is not judged elsewhere, but the judgment of those who have thus judged it is accepted as owning

one Spirit.

It is important to distinguish between purging out and purging from. In the normal state of the church when all who believed were together, and all outside were unbelievers, it was said

purge out (1 Cor. 5:7);

but for a time of ruin -- a great house -- when all kinds of evil have been associated with the name of our precious Lord Jesus, the faithful are also told to

purge from (see 2 Tim. 2:19-21).

9. *The path* in thus

endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace {Eph. 4:3}

must, therefore, be connected with *practical separation* from those who are acting contrary to the truth, and holiness, and ways of the Spirit's unity. We may cross the street to greet one whom we believe to be a member of the

one body,

and so far be endeavouring to keep the Spirit's unity, even though his sectarian ways forbid us going with him further.

Communion with the Lord through His truth will guide us as to these things, and every other act, for the glory of God.

Those, therefore, who are intelligently keeping the Spirit's unity recognise that the same Holy Spirit as a divine person dwells in every child of God all over the world, that all have access unto the Father through the Lord Jesus by one Spirit, and that God dwells through the Spirit all over the earth where the Lord's name is professed -- the house. They gladly own all true believers on earth united by one Spirit to Christ in heaven;

as members of one body,

one new man {Eph. 2:15};

and, while doing so, wait

for God's Son from heaven {see 1 Thess. 1:10}

-- the

one hope {Eph. 4:4}

of our calling. It is impossible, therefore, to own two or more

companies of saints in any place who are not in fellowship as according to the truth, for there is

One body;

or to own different ways of dealing with the same matters in discipline for there is

One Spirit;

or to hold diverse hopes, for there is

One hope.

A lowly mind, and waiting on the Lord in meekness are needed to enable any to receive, hold, and act out these things.

The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way (Psa. 25:9).

Things New and Old 25:20-25.

Looking Up Into Heaven

When a believer is full of the holy Ghost, where will he look? and what will mark his testimony? We are told that Stephen,

being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7).

Thus we learn that the Holy Ghost led him to look away from his present trial to the Lord Himself, where He now is in the glory of God. He was thus led by the Spirit to gaze stedfastly on that blessed One who loved him and gave Himself for him. He was occupied with the glorified Man who a short time before had suffered at the hands of his betrayers and murderers, who no doubt was strengthening His servant's faith, and encouraging his heart, by presenting to his view a martyr's crown. It was not now Stephen remembering a finished work done for him on the cross, blessed as it always is, but occupation with the Person who had done the work. Thus the Spirit of God directs us to look to Christ in glory.

Stephen's testimony to others, therefore, was concerning this wondrous Person who now filled his soul's vision, occupied every faculty of his mind, and filled every chamber of his heart. He was absorbed with the Lord Himself, so that he said,

Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God (Acts 7:55, 56).

Of what else could he speak at such a moment, but the glorified Man? What a testimony! It was not abstract doctrine, however true, or important in its place; but what he saw and was occupied with, was the Lord Himself.

We read also of Barnabas being

a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith {Acts 11:24},

and what was his testimony? Like the martyr we have been looking at, he could only speak of Him who was the chief treasure of his heart.

He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto *the Lord* (Acts 23:24).

How true it is that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Occupation then with Christ glorified is certainly the Object to which the Holy Ghost directs us, and the One He leads us to commend and minister to others.

On referring a little further to scripture, we shall find that the secret of our walking as Christ walked, of growing in grace, of sustainment in the life of faith, and of joy -- blessings which we all so desire -- are realised in personal intercourse and communion with Christ glorified.

The effect of Stephen's being taken up with Christ in heaven, in all the attractiveness of His grace and glory, was that he acted like his Master, and that, under the most trying and distressing circumstances. The suffering martyr was able to pray for those that hated him and despitefully used him --

He kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge {Acts 7:60}.

We also find that when the stones of his cruel murderers were rolling in upon his body and crushing him to death, he quietly and confidently committed himself to the Lord, saying,

Lord Jesus, receive my spirit {Acts 7:59}!

Thus the suffering servant on earth looking up stedfastly into heaven, and occupied with the Lord Himself, was able in measure to walk as He walked, who when suffering all the agonies of the cross, prayed for His murderers, saying,

Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do {Luke 23:34},

and also closed His path of suffering with

Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit {Luke 23:46}.

What then can be more plainly taught than that if we would manifest the ways of Christ on earth, we must be taken up with Him who is now on the right hand of God?

Making spiritual progress, or growing in grace, is also connected with beholding Christ glorified. We most thankfully *remember* that He was on earth, and delight to *call to mind* all the

grace manifested in the death of the cross, and know also that He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps; but we *see* Jesus where?

We *see* Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9).

The veil was rent, the heaven opened, Jesus rose from among the dead, and entered into heaven itself by His own blood, so that all distance was removed between us and God, and title given us to stand in the presence of God in acceptance and nearness for ever. There we see Jesus. There we behold Him without a veil. There is now nothing between. We come boldly to the throne of grace. There we have to do with the risen, ascended, glorified Son of man, while waiting for Him to

come again {John 14:3}.

The effect of our being occupied with Him there by the Spirit, as He is made known to us through the scriptures, is that we become more and more changed according to His own mind.

We all, with open [or unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

Thus we have seen not only that the Holy Ghost directs us to look up to a glorified Christ, and occupies us with Him, but also that then our ways will be like His ways, our testimony be of Him, and our progress will be according to His own mind -- from glory to glory,

How encouraging to our hearts to look up to Him!

The secret too of sustainment in the trials connected with the life and walk of faith is having to do with the ever living Sustainer. There is One, now in heaven, who has been here, and passed through sorrows and temptations, who, though verily and truly God as well as man, yet emptied Himself, took a servant's form, and trod perfectly the path of faith from first to last. He was the Beginner and Finisher of faith, and at last sat down on the right hand of the throne of God. It is to Him, the Forerunner, we, who are running the race, are exhorted to look; to look away from every other object to Him, with the eye fixed on Him, who has gone through the path perfectly, and knows all its difficulties, temptations, and trials. This ever-living, ever-loving Jesus on the throne is then our Sustainer for every step of the way. It is well for those who thus look off unto Him!

Christ glorified is also the unfading, and unfailing Object for our hearts --

whom having not seen, ye love {1 Pet. 1:8}.

Yes, there is One in the glory who has attracted, comforted, and satisfied our hearts. Oh how He loves! We see in Him eternal excellencies and beauty which eclipse every other object

We love him, because he first loved us {1 John 4:19};

and not only so, but we love Him for what He is in Himself. As we often sing --

"Jesus, Thou art enough
The mind and heart to fill."

Being thus occupied with Him, our hearts are filled with joy. We remember His finished work upon the cross, and have *peace*, we look up to Him in the glory and are filled with *joy*.

Then were the disciples glad, when *they saw the Lord* {John 20:20}.

Looking up and gazing by faith on a Person whom we have never seen and cannot see, and yet knowing Him so well -- His worth, beauty, perfections, moral excellencies, official glories and fulness -- as to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

What never-failing springs and resources we have in Christ! What an ever-flowing fountain of refreshment and comfort! Gladly we flee to Him in time of trouble for *relief*, but what do we know of Him as an unending source of delight for our hearts? Would indeed that we could say more of His manifesting Himself to us, of the hearty and deep-toned joy we find in personal intercourse and acquaintance with Himself! Then obedience, testimony, fellowship with Him in His rejection and present work on earth, as those who look for His coming, naturally, as it were, flow out. O to know increasingly the blessedness connected with looking up into heaven, and beholding Jesus there till we hear the shout! How soon He may come for us! What a moment that will be when we actually see His face! and then

"For ever to behold Him shine!
For evermore to call Him mine!
And see Him still before me;
For ever on His face to gaze!
And meet the full assembled rays,
While all His beauty He displays
To all the saints in glory!"

Things New and Old, 25:38-43.

Our Standing and State

It is most precious to the Christian to remember that, whatever else may change, his *standing in Christ*, through the exceeding riches of the grace of God, remains always the same. Founded as it is on the everlasting efficacy of the work of the cross, and effected by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, nothing can possibly shake his nearness and acceptance in Him. The believer's experience may be pleasant or painful; his circumstances may be prosperous or adverse; he may be at one time in the sweetest, happiest enjoyment of fellowship with the Lord, and at another time distressed and humbled under the buffetings of a messenger of Satan; but all through, his standing in Christ is unmoved -- he is unchangeably accepted in the Beloved. With other believers he is entitled to say;

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7).

Such is the unalterable character of the *standing* of the believer. He is a new creation *in Christ Jesus*. But his *state of soul* is another thing, and it is well to distinguish between them. A christian servant-girl once said to the writer, "I am sorry to say, sir, that my *state* does not agree with my

standing." In this remark she was only expressing the minds of many more. In one sense, if our *state* were as perfect as our *standing*, we should be practically perfect; but, in another aspect of the subject, we judge it cannot but be very displeasing to the Lord when our state of soul is very contrary to the mind of Him who is our life and righteousness -- the Holy and the True -- in whom we are always seen by God as He is. To hold high truth, and to go on contentedly with a low walk, cannot but grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. And yet it cannot be controverted that this is a striking feature among Christians in our day. Now what is to be done? We cannot certainly give up the most blessed truth of our standing, and oh, the endearing relationships with the Father and the Son, into which divine grace has brought us, and made known to us by the Holy Ghost; but should we not consider how far these relationships and our present *standing* are so apprehended by us as to produce that *state* of soul which such marvelous grace must necessarily effect in us? How true it is that we love Him because He first loved us!

Things New and Old 25:48-50.

Sins Purged, Conscience Purged, and Worshipers Purged

When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

The worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins (Hebrews 1:3, 10:2).

It is a marvelous fact that the Son of God has purged our sins. In this work He was perfectly alone. He did it by Himself. No one else could have done it; no one throughout God's universe was either competent to do it, or willing to do it. But, blessed be His name, He willingly and lovingly came to seek and to save that which was lost. It was the divine will that sins should be purged, that sinners should be saved; and Jesus said,

Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God {Heb. 10:7}.

This necessitated the cross on Calvary. Not a sinner could be in the glory, unless his sins were righteously judged, and divine justice was perfectly satisfied about them. This is why God sent forth His Son. This is why He was made a little lower than the angels. This is why He, by whom the worlds were made, became flesh, and dwelt among us. He was made of a woman, and born of a woman, that, by the suffering of death for our sins, He might glorify God and redeem us.

It was necessary then that He should be the Sin-bearer, and suffer that judgment of God which we deserved in order that our sins should be purged. It was the most solemn hour in the whole period of time within the compass of God's universe. The Son of

God was found here in the likeness of sinful flesh. Man verily, perfect man, as well as most truly God; this sent One was in due time delivered up for us all, so that we are instructed in the scriptures that He was delivered for our offences, that He actually bore our sins, suffered for sins, died for sins, and in this way purged our sins. Thus our sins were so righteously judged, so fully dealt with according to unsparing holiness, that when He bowed His head in death upon the cross, He said

It is finished {John 19:30}.

He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; yea, it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him, and so to put Him to grief and to forsake Him as bearing our sins, that in unutterable agony He cried out

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1}.

It is then the astounding fact of the Son of God having had our iniquity laid upon Him, and suffering in consequence all the righteous vengeance of God due to our sins, that they are purged, so that as a prophet said,

with his stripes we are healed {Isa. 53:5}.

And not only did He drink up and drain to the dregs the cup of infinite indignation and judgment which we deserved because of

our sins, but it is also most profoundly and blessedly true that in all the unspeakable distress, brokenness of heart, desertion, and agony which it brought upon Him, that He fully honoured and glorified God. On that cross of unequalled pain and shame, His perfect love to the Father and to us, His entire surrender of Himself, His delight in the will of God, His unwavering faith, and obedience unto death *even* the death of the cross, were most pleasing to God, and for His eternal praise and glory. How truly then could the holy Sufferer say when under the shadow of the cross, and yet in spirit beyond it,

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was (John 17:4, 5).

In the grave question of our sins being purged (the most solemn and momentous exercise which ever occupied a soul on earth), we see how fully the marvelous work has been wrought without the least compromise of one of the divine attributes, or the least omission as to meeting our deep need. For not only did the Son of God in death upon the cross magnify the love, holiness, grace, justice, truth, and faithfulness of God, but our sins were so strictly and unsparingly judged, that the Holy Ghost points to Him risen and ascended, and tells us that

when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high {Heb. 1:3}.

There never was a sacrifice offered before that purged sins for ever from the eye of God. Not all the blood of bulls, and lambs, and goats which were ever sacrificed could do this. We read that

it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins {Heb. 10:4},

but that

the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin {1 John 1:7}.

Is it any wonder then that we are told of the Son, who made all things, and upholds all things, that after

he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high?

The purification of our sins then took place on the cross more than eighteen hundred years ago, and there will never be another such work.

There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins {Heb. 10:26};

forgiveness of sins is now known when we believe, and we see the One who did it now in heaven on the right hand of God

crowned with glory and honour {Heb. 2:9}.

Blessed resting-place for the soul that can look up to heaven and say, "There's the One that purged my sins!" How truly when looking back on His death on the cross we can say --

"Thy thirst for our salvation,
This made Thee come to die;
O love beyond all measure,
Wherewith thou didst embrace
The victims of the pressure
Of sin and its disgrace."

It is when the efficacy of the death of the Son of God is believed, being brought home to the sin-convicted soul by the

Holy Spirit, that the *conscience* realises its peace-giving power. It is clear that in ordinary business a man might be greatly distressed at meeting a creditor to whom he owed a large sum of money and had no means of paying it. It is equally clear that supposing a kind friend had interfered and paid the debt for him, and he knew it not, it would not be the least relief to him; he would still have the same fear and dread of meeting his creditor. But, on the other hand, when he heard the good news that another person had, in the truest love and compassion, freely paid his debt and also shown him the lawful receipt for all demands, what relief would it give, what rest and peace would it impart to his sin-burdened soul! Would he then be afraid to meet his former creditor? Would he not boldly hold intercourse with him as if nothing had ever been between them? And if he heard the very one to whom he had been so heavily indebted say, "I have nothing against you, all is cleared away, all has been justly settled, and I have moreover given you a share of my large possessions," what a marvelous change would it produce in his feelings, purposes, and prospects! But all this relief of conscience, and all the kindness of the former creditor, fail to illustrate the way in which the conscience of the believer is purged, or to set forth the fellowship into which we are called with the very One we had so dreaded, and only thought of as an angry Judge.

The distress of a sin-convicted soul no one knows but those who have had to do with God, and hold themselves accountable to Him who is holy, and of purer eyes than to behold evil. The consciousness of being exposed to the wrath of God, of justly deserving at His hands everlasting indignation and anguish for having sinned against Him, and seeing no way of escape, is connected with such heartfelt misery as no human language can describe. Such have indeed an evil and an accusing conscience, which no dead works or ordinances of any kind can cleanse. But when such learn on the authority of God's word, by the Spirit's teaching, that Christ Jesus has made purification of sins by His own death and blood-shedding on the cross for every one that believeth, then the first ray of hope rises on the desponding soul; and when he ponders the work of the cross, and the perfections and glory of the Person who did it -- when he bears and receives the testimony of God as to its sin-atoning and sin-cleansing virtues, then he sets to his seal that God is true, and realises as a precious fact that he himself is cleansed from all sin.

What a moment of indescribable peace and comfort the soul then knows! Having learnt that God in righteousness must condemn sin, and having welcomed the precious truth that He gave His own Son to bear our sins, and the judgment due to them, in order that we might be without sin and whiter than snow in His presence; having believed the divine testimony, that Christ was thus

delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification {Rom. 4:25},

he soon finds himself in the very presence of God reconciled and cleansed by His most precious blood. Now, like the poor debtor, he rejoices that another, in pure mercy, paid all his debts for him, and though he be a poor trembling believer, he knows that he is by Christ justified from all things.

He has now a purged conscience. By the precious blood of Christ, brought home to his soul by the Holy Ghost, and received

in faith in its all-cleansing efficacy, on the authority of the word of God, his heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience. This is much more than a *quiet* conscience, he has a *purged* conscience, for he is wholly set free from guilt in the very presence of God. Many, we fear, are lulled by false religiousness, in various deceptive forms, into a *quiet state* of mind, but a conscience *purged* by the blood of Christ is a very different thing. Before this is known, many are going on practising dead works, vainly promising themselves to make, as they say, "a good end at last." They are always hoping to be right, which proves they are not. They perform

dead works {Heb. 9:14}

to save themselves. But when the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Christ is known on the conscience, they are delivered from

dead works,

and delight to praise and honour Him who has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. Hence we read,

How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Heb. 9:14).

So truly is the conscience cleansed, that such

have no more conscience of sins {see Heb. 10:2}.

Having had the conscience

once purged {Heb. 10:2},

they never know again, as they did before, the intolerable load of a sinner's guilt before God. Troubled in conscience as saints they may be on account of falls and failures which have been dishonouring to God our Father; and so having lost communion with Him. But if such confess their sins, He is faithful and just to forgive them their sins, and thus give them restoration to communion again. The truth is that those who believe in the Son of God are no longer looked at by God as rebellious sinners in their sins, but are justified persons, children of God, objects of the Father's changeless and eternal love. So infinite is the efficacy of the blood of Christ on the conscience, that we are told that by one offering we are

sanctified

(or set apart for God), and

perfected for ever (Heb. 10:10-14).

Thus we are brought into the very presence of God, to find every question as to our title to be there for ever settled, and to have

no more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2}.

Then we know that the One who

Purged our sins {Heb. 1:3}

went into heaven itself by His own blood, and this bows our hearts with adoring worship and thanksgiving. Being

purged worshipers {see Heb. 10:2},

we can offer unto God, by Christ, the sacrifice of praise continually, giving thanks to His name. There we can

rejoice in the Lord always {see Phil. 4:4},

and worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Happy are those who so simply receive the testimony of God as to the work of His Son, as to know that they are

worshipers once purged,
and have

no more conscience of sins {Heb. 10:2}.

What unspeakable blessedness we are brought into through the blood of Christ! Sins judged, and dealt with in divine righteousness, according to the holiness of God, in the person of His Son instead of us! The conscience, too, so purged as to be before God -- in the light, as He is in the light -- in perfect peace. Not a question remains unanswered, not a doubt that has not been fully removed, not a fear that has not been completely cast out, God also giving us His own testimony to the value of the blood of His Son that it

cleanseth us from all sin {1 John 1:7};

that where remission of these is there remaineth no more offering for sin, that by one offering He hath

perfected for ever them that are sanctified {Heb. 10:14},

and their sins and iniquities He will remember no more. What liberty also to be now inside the vail in the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, where He always appears before the face of God for us!

Things New and Old 25:57-65.

Position, Condition, And Testimony

Joshua 5, 6

To the soul that is born of God, perhaps few things are of more importance than having the consciousness that he is occupying the *position* on earth during our Lord's absence which is according to His will. The scriptures abound with clear lines of instruction as to this. Not only have we apostolic testimony for the time when the church was set up on earth, and the order and godly ways it should maintain, but even the present time of ruin and departure is contemplated, and the path for the faithful clearly pointed out.

As to the *position* we should occupy in these last days, is it likely we should be competent to discern and hold our true place on earth, unless we have taken the place and relationships He has graciously given us in His own presence? As long as there is hesitancy and uncertainty as to this, how can we be responding to it in the ways of holiness and truth marked out for us while passing through this Christ-rejecting world?

When the children of Israel took possession of
the land {Josh. 5:11, 12}

under Joshua, their *position* toward Jehovah, toward their brethren, and toward the Gentiles, became clear enough. They found also, when there, the amplest provision for the sustainment of their *condition*, and also for the *testimony* they were called on to bear. All was of an entirely new order, and could not have been known before they were in the *position* beyond Jordan, which God in His sovereignty had given them.

The believer now, by grace, has been quickened, raised up, and made to sit in heavenly places in Christ. He is thus on the other side of the Jordan of death and judgment. Having died with Christ He is risen with Christ, alive in Him for evermore, and united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down. Thus he is blessed in heavenly places in Christ. There he is always

complete in him {Col. 2:10}.

We are now therefore not in the first Adam, not in the flesh, though alas! the flesh is in us, not in our sins, not under law, and not of the world, but in heavenly places in Christ, and loved by the Father as He loved Jesus. The believer has no other position before God. When he takes this place of nearness, acceptance, and blessing, he, as it were, enters into

the land

which typified our present position in heavenly places. Such then are conscious not only of eternal security and blessing, but also of being separated off to God, and therefore should be *from* everything which is contrary to His mind.

Until this marvelous calling and standing is entered upon and enjoyed, how is it possible that we can walk worthy of it? If the believer is not consciously near to God, he will be struggling to get near; and if he does not see that he is

accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6},

he will be hoping to be accepted. He is not standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.

If he does not know that he is now a child of God, how can he walk as a child? If he does not realise the truth that he is a member of the body of Christ, how can he be

holding the Head {Col. 2:19},

walking according to his relationship with every other member of the

one body {Col. 3:15, 16}

and standing apart from every principle which denies it? If he does not apprehend the fact that the Holy Ghost dwells in him and in every member of the body of Christ, and that it is the power for all godliness, how can he be hearkening to what the Spirit saith, and be giving diligence to keep the Spirit's unity? It is when the Christian has entered upon and enjoys his present standing and relationships in heavenly places, when he holds the Head, and owns the Holy Ghost, then open worldliness and spurious Christianity are alike distasteful to him, and he finds that he has a place on earth of service and testimony to the Lord Jesus Christ. Such find no difficulty in concluding that they should withdraw from moral, ecclesiastical, or doctrinal iniquity, and purge themselves from vessels to dishonour, or whatever is unsuited to the name of Him who is

the holy and the true {see Rev. 3:7}.

As we have before observed, when the children of Israel got into the land they found the fullest provision made for their *condition*; and after all, a position however orthodox, will be a poor thing if it be only regarded in the way of outward observance. We are told

they did eat of the old corn of the land {Josh. 5:11, 12}.

This sets before us Christ in the heavenlies, which those who take their true place there, find to be the constant joy and strength of their hearts. Such become then occupied with a glorified Christ; and we may be quite sure that no child of God is in his right *position*, or in a healthy *condition* who is not thus taken up with the glorified Son of man. Now he can speak of

having nothing and yet possessing all things {2 Cor. 6:10}.

Now he looks back on the cross, and *remembers* Him who died there, and he looks up into heaven and beholds with unveiled face the glory of the Lord. Looking back on the cross he is reminded that he has put off the old man, that he has crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts, and there too he is reminded that on it all his blessings both now and for ever are founded. But gazing by faith on Christ in the glory his soul is feasted, his heart gladdened, his faith sustained, his strength renewed, and the bright hope of the Lord's coming makes him feel superior to everything here. Trouble he may have, and battles he may have to fight, but the Lord is his strength and salvation, and gives him comfort and encouragement in the conflict.

Does the christian reader know what it is to be enjoying this new *position* of nearness and acceptance in the heavenlies in Christ? If not, may you now by faith accept it from the Lord, who declares, that, however feeble your faith, yet by His grace, having

Christ crucified, risen, and glorified as the object of your heart's trust, you are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. There too Christ is your present strength and sufficiency. Happy are those who are

strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might
{Eph. 6:10};

who seek to walk and act in the wisdom, power, and all-sufficient grace of Christ. Such feel their weakness, no one feels it so much; but they search the word for God's testimony concerning Christ, and daily find Him to be like

the old corn of the land

to their souls. Without this daily renewing by feeding on Christ through the scriptures, by the power of the Holy Ghost, how can we be in that *condition* or state of soul which is pleasing to God? Would the children of Israel have been enabled to fight the battles and walk in the ways which were appointed them by Jehovah, had they neglected to feed upon

the old corn of the land?

How needful then it is that our souls should be occupied with our Lord Jesus Christ! Even to the apostles our Lord declared

Without me ye can do nothing {John 15:5}.

He therefore said unto them,

Abide in me {John 15:4},

for He Himself is the only source of fruit-bearing. May we then cleave unto the Lord, as having all resources for service, testimony, and for all fruit-bearing in Him, being assured however clear we may be as to our true position, if personal intercourse and communion with the Lord be neglected --

the old corn of the land

not eaten -- that condition will inevitably be lacking which produces true *testimony*.

The *testimony* therefore which is suited to the believer flows out of a true *position* and *condition*. How could any one testify of the world that its works were evil if he were practically of it? Or, how could a person contend for the absolute authority of scripture, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the source of all true gifts for ministry of the word, and that the Holy Ghost's presence on earth is the power of all godliness, if he himself were accrediting the systems and traditions of men, and acknowledging to human credentials and official trappings?

But we have a testimony to bear. Jesus said,

If a man love me, he will keep my words (John 14:23).

John was banished by the haters of the truth to the desolate island of Patmos,

for the word of God, and for the *testimony* of Jesus Christ
(Rev. 1:9).

Timothy was enjoined by the apostle Paul

not to be ashamed of the *testimony* of our Lord {see
2 Tim. 1:8},

and to

hold fast the form of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13).

If the question be asked,

Who is sufficient for these things? {2 Cor. 2:16}.

The answer is,

Our sufficiency is of God {2 Cor. 3:5},

In tracing a little the ways of the children of Israel after they had taken possession of the land, after they had been circumcised (to us putting off the body of the flesh in the death of Christ), after keeping the passover, thus acknowledging all their blessings were founded on the blood of the Lamb, and after having eaten of

the old corn of the land,

their *testimony* was marked by obedience to the will of God, by accepting the place of separation and rejection, and by caring for souls. No *testimony* can be according to God that is not in obedience to His revealed will. We are enjoined to be

as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to
the former lusts in your ignorance, &c. (1 Pet. 1:14).

To keep in our hearts and carry out in our lives the words of Jesus, characterises those who love Him. And we may be sure, if we are simply doing the Lord's will, it must certainly lead us into the path of separation from the world, and into the place of its rejection. By the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, the world is not only crucified unto us, but we are crucified unto it. The will of God was that the people of Israel should take their place outside the doomed city of Jericho, and it soon became apparent they were not of it, but in closest association with

the ark {Josh. 6:4}

outside it. The believer, too, is taught that he is not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world; and as certainly as he is in heavenly places in Christ, so is Christ (whom the ark typified) with those who are in obedient testimony for Him on earth, looking for judgment coming upon this doomed world, as pronounced by Him who said,

Now is the judgment of this world {John 12:31}.

As surely as

the ark

was with the children of Israel, so truly is Christ in the midst of two or three who are gathered together in His name. If they were told to be silent, and merely walk round about the city once, they did it. If they were told to sound the trumpets of rams' horns, they did it. If they were told to

shout {Josh. 6:5},

they did it. If they were told not to covet the Canaanites' wealth, or the Babylonish garment, they had to reap the bitter fruits of one of their company being disobedient. And so now the principle is the same; obedience to the word of God is always connected with blessing, but disobedience with sorrow;

for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he
that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, &c.
(Gal. 6:7, 8).

It is a point never to be forgotten that God acts in government as well as in grace.

The testimony in men's account may be mean and poor as the blowing of a ram's horn, or as small as a quiet walk round about the city; nevertheless, it was the place of separation from the doomed city, and obedience to Jehovah's will. Their lines of service were ordered for them. They cared too for souls. A harlot

and her household and kindred and all that she had, sheltered in the house marked by the scarlet line in the window, were objects of their solicitude; and Joshua commanded the two spies who had set before her the only way of escape to bring them all out, that they might be safe from the impending and desolating judgment. And so it was.

May every child of God who reads these lines learn that our faithful *position* on earth is connected with our acceptance of our true place in heaven, and that all *testimony* according to God is connected with that condition which results from personal intercourse and communion with the Lord Himself!

Things New and Old 25:101-109.

Return! Return!

O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God;
for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity (Hosea 14).

These words were the utterances of the prophet of Jehovah to His ancient people, Israel, at a time when He was about to deliver them into captivity because of their long-continued rebellion and idolatry. When the people really repent, and return to Jehovah, and acknowledge their true Messiah, then this chapter, and many others, will have their gracious accomplishment. Before that, this same prophet informs us, that

the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim:

[in fact as they now are, without a false god or the true God], and

AFTERWARD shall the children of Israel return, and seek Jehovah their God, and David their king; and shall fear Jehovah and his goodness in the latter days (Hos. 3:4, 5).

The former of these verses is being accomplished at the present hour; for the latter verse to have its fulfilment we wait for the coming of the Lord, when, in a state of repentance, they will say,

Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord
{Matt. 23:39; Luke 13:35}.

The testimony of Hosea literally applies to the Jewish people, and every part of it shall yet have its accomplishment in all the magnificence and mercy of the prophetic utterances; but we shall use it now as illustrating

the ministry of reconciliation {2 Cor. 5:18}

now preached to every creature under heaven, the way in which a sinner is reconciled to God, and some of the blessed results.

The *state of the people* is remarkably described -- they had fallen by their iniquity. By their sins they had destroyed themselves. In making molten images of silver, and idols, according to their own understanding, they had sinned

more and more {Hos. 13:2}.

Yet God did not give them up. The cry of the prophet was,

O Israel, return unto Jehovah thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity {Hos. 14:1}.

And so an apostle, in unfolding the glad tidings to be preached to every creature, not only declares that all have sinned, and that all are under sin, and guilty before God, but still he cries, Return, Return --

be ye reconciled to God {2 Cor. 5:20}!

If sinners are saved, it can only be by having to do with God, the God of all grace.

The *way of return* is also clearly marked out. The prophet almost puts words into their mouths suitable for them to utter. He says,

Take with you words, and turn unto Jehovah thy God; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously
{Hos. 14:2}.

They were to approach God with confession of their sins, and reckon upon Him who says,

Return,

to receive them graciously. And so now. It is sinners God saves, and saves them as sinners, and because they are sinners; for

God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us {Rom. 5:8}.

The prodigal's way of return was,

I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight {Luke 15:21}.

Peter's confession was,

I am a sinful man, O Lord {Luke 5:8}.

The centurion declared that he was not worthy that Christ should come under his roof. The Syrophenician woman took her place as a dog which looked for a crumb to fall from her Master's table. The prophet, when brought into a deeper sense of the reality of having to do with a holy God, said,

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips {Isa. 6:5}.

And when a soul considers that he must give account of himself to God, that he must, sooner or later, have to do with God, who knows all things, and is of purer eyes than to behold evil, he cannot but be conscious of how unfit he is for the presence of One who is so perfectly holy. The gospel is a message from God -- the glad-tidings of the grace of God; it tells of God's compassion and mercy to men in their sins, and calls upon them to return to God, to have to do with Him who is able and willing, and ready to save. The ministry of reconciliation is,

Be ye reconciled to God {2 Cor. 5:20}.

If anything can subdue the enmity of the human heart, and give it confidence in God, whom he now so dreads, it is seeing that God provides the Savior in delivering His own Son for our offences, to bear the judgment due to them in the death of the cross, and in virtue of the everlasting efficacy of His atoning work, is now sending far and wide the ministry of reconciliation, saying by His servants,

we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God {2 Cor. 5:20}.

Do you, reader, know what it is thus to have to do with God, to go before Him as a sinner confessing your sins, thus counting on God to take away all iniquity, and receive you graciously? Be assured there is no other way of matters being really made up between you and God, no possibility of being

reconciled to God,

but

by the death of his Son {Rom. 5:10};

for the death of Jesus is the only answer to the righteous claims of God for the sins of those who are saved.

How simple, and yet how magnificent, is this holy and gracious way of a sinner's being reconciled to God! No demands, reader, are made on you. It is God who, in such infinite grace, has made the way, and, oh, at what a cost! It is God who sends the glad tidings of the way of reconciliation! It is God who has bidden His servants to cry,

In Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God {2 Cor. 5:20}.

It is the grace of God which brings salvation! It was God who delivered up His own Son

for our offences,

and was

raised again for our justification {Rom. 4:25}.

It is God who is the Justifier of all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Have, then, to do with God. Return! Return!

Take with you words: . . . say, . . . Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously {Hos. 14:2};

and thus approaching God through the death of His Son, you will be pardoned, reconciled, and justified from all things. Oh, what a precious message is the

ministry of reconciliation {2 Cor. 5:18}!

When a person has thus really had to do with God, he has necessarily renounced confidence in an arm of flesh. Though formerly, in time of difficulty and trial, he had made some visible helper his resource, he does so no longer, because he now knows the living God. He says,

Asshur shall not save us {Hos. 14:3}.

He has done also with his own contrivances, and abandoned his own ideas of escaping danger --

We will not flee upon horses {see Hos. 14:3; see also Isa. 30:16}.

Neither have the idols that men invent and worship any longer a hold upon him, for this acquaintance with the true God has delivered him from every false god:

Neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods {Hos. 14:3}.

Yes, the death of the Son of God upon the cross has told him of the compassion, and grace, and goodness of

the only wise God {1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 1:25},

so that he no longer doubts His love toward the helpless and needy soul that approaches Him through the death of His Son,

for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy {Hos. 14:3}.

Now let us look at some of the results of thus being reconciled to God.

1. PEACE and ASSURANCE. Such have their sins forgiven, and are assured of it.

I will heal their backsliding {Hos. 14:4}

was the prophet's word to Israel; while an apostle declares that,

being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:1}.

Peace with God is always founded on the blood. Hence we read,

Having made peace through the blood of his cross {Col. 1:20};

Being now justified by his blood {Rom. 5:9}.

But *assurance* is communicated to us by God's word; so that we are told that the sinner, by believing on the Lord Jesus, is justified from all things, has remission of sins, is born of God, has eternal life, is a child of God, and is also brought into other marvelous blessings and relationships. How can any one who has been reconciled to God by the death of His Son doubt, then, that he has eternal life, present forgiveness of sins, &c.? (See Acts 13:39, 10:43; 1 John 5:11-13; Gal. 3:26). Then the prophet assures the returning ones that all is well, that God is no longer angry with them, and that they are objects of His love.

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him {Hos. 14:4}.

Let it never be forgotten that assurance of salvation, though founded on the finished work of Christ, is communicated to us *always*, by the Spirit, through the unalterable word of God.

2. Worship. The soul that has returned to God, and is reconciled to Him by the death of His Son, finds that his happiest moments are when consciously in His presence. Having received the Spirit of adoption, and having known that Jesus said concerning His own disciples,

I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God {John 20:17},

he has to do with God in the endearing relationship of Father. This bows our hearts in worship. We cannot but give thanks; we cannot but praise and adore our God as

the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort {2 Cor. 1:3}.

If the prophet declares that the returning ones of God's earthly people will be constrained to say,

so will we render the calves of our lips {Hos. 14:2},

how much more will His own children now worship the Father in spirit and in truth (for the Father seeketh such to worship Him), and as a heavenly people, exultingly cry out,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3)!

Is it, therefore, any wonder that we are enjoined

By him to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name (Heb. 13:15).

3. OBJECTS OF GOD'S BLESSING. Brought into the favour of God, and accepted in the Beloved, the believer should reckon on

God's blessing being upon him, and with him. It is for our consolation to know that the Father Himself loveth us, and that even as He loves Jesus. This, too, He would have us know and enjoy, for Jesus said to the Father,

I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be *in them*, and I in them {John 17:26}.

If, then, the promise of Jehovah to returning Israelites is,

I will be as the dew unto Israel {Hos. 14:5},

the power of fruitfulness and blessing, how much more may those who are

heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ {Rom. 8:17},

count upon His richest and best consolations and blessings!

4. GROWTH. As new-born babes we are exhorted to desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby; to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. While our new-creation standing and acceptance in Christ always remain the same, there is progress in divine knowledge, and in the believer's devotedness and walk. His faith may grow exceedingly, and his love abound. His service also may grow in extent from five talents to ten, and its quality be more according to the Lord's mind. It is said of Israel,

he shall grow as the lily {Hos. 14:5};

so, as we really grow in grace, we shall choose the lowly path, care less for the approval or disapproval of men, and more and more manifest the purity and spotlessness of the lily. We shall thus be more rooted and grounded in love, and by taking deeper root downward in the springs of divine grace and truth, we shall bear fruit upward, our branches will spread outward, so as to be able to offer protection and shelter to others. Then there will not be unevenness and crookedness in the Christian's walk, his beauty will be as symmetrical as

the olive-tree {Hos. 14:6},

and his savour of Christ be like the fragrance of

Lebanon {Hos. 14:7}.

He will grow, not as the oak, but as

the vine {Hos. 14:7},

in the constant consciousness of weakness, and need of clinging to another for support, so that he dreads the idea of independence, and knows his utter helplessness, if left for one moment to his own resources. More and more he learns the divinely-taught lesson,

From me is thy fruit found {Hos. 14:8}.

Happy indeed are those who have hearkened to the ministry of reconciliation, who have returned to God, and known what it is to be

reconciled to God by the death of His Son {Rom. 5:10}!

Should these lines fall under the notice of any true believer who keenly feels the smart of having wandered from the Lord, and has been, perhaps, decoyed by Satan into bye-paths of sin and folly, we beseech such to listen to the words at the head of this paper:

O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity {Hos. 14:1};

then the One against whom you have so sinned will graciously meet you on returning, saying,

I will heal your backsliding; I will love you freely {see Hos. 14:4}.

Can anything be more encouraging? Hearken also to the gracious words of God by another prophet:

Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you; for I am merciful, saith the Lord. . . . only acknowledge thine iniquity, that thou hast transgressed against the Lord thy God (Jer. 3:12, 13).

May the words, too, of an aged apostle bow thine heart before God:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness {1 John 1:9}.

Return! Return!

Draw nigh to God

with full confession, and be assured that

he will draw nigh to you {James 4:8}.

Return! Return!

Things New and Old 25:113-122.

The Holy Ghost

No. 1

Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost? . . . thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God (Acts 5:3, 4).

At a Bible-reading, some time ago, the question was asked, "Where is the Devil?" Some one immediately replied, "In hell"; and when another question was asked, "Where is the Holy Ghost?" the answer given was, "In heaven." Now it need scarcely be said that neither of these answers were correct. The fact is that persons, even Christians, are so accustomed to think and speak about spiritual things without considering what the real truth is as revealed by God in His word, that the most unscriptural, and extraordinary notions are widely circulated in Christendom which are not only wrong, but sometimes dead against the truth of God. As to Satan, he is not yet shut up, but he will be. Instead of being under confinement, he is

going to and fro in the earth {Job 1:7, 2:2};

he is not omnipresent, but

walking up and down in it {Job 1:7, 2:2}.

Peter says,

Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour {1 Pet. 5:8}.

Yes, he is still

the accuser of our brethren {Rev. 12:10},

which deceiveth the whole world {Rev. 12:9},

and

the wolf which catcheth . . . and scattereth the sheep {see John 10:12}.

And as to the Holy Spirit, though He be a divine Person and therefore everywhere present, yet nothing is more clearly revealed in scripture than that He came down and took up His abode in God's people on earth, on the day of Pentecost, to abide with us for ever. And the more we search the scriptures on the subject, the more we shall be assured that the gift of the Holy Ghost consequent upon an accomplished redemption is the characteristic truth of Christianity.

Is it any wonder then that it should be so perverted and denied by our subtle adversary? Is it not most distressing to hear of some denying that He is God; of others praying that He may be sent down; others pleading for a greater measure of the Spirit, a fresh baptism, and a pentecostal blessing? All these points, and many more concerning the Godhead, personality, indwelling, and operations of the Holy Ghost we hope briefly to consider; but we are assured that most of the other errors arise from not knowing Him as a divine Person, co-equal with the Father and the Son.

In the text at the head of this paper He is distinctly and unmistakeably called *God*, and a Person capable of being lied to. Hence He is sometimes called

the Spirit of God;

and the things of God knoweth no man but

the Spirit of God {1 Cor. 2:11}.

He has then *eternal* attributes, for He is

the eternal Spirit {Heb. 9:14}.

Before the earth and the heavens were formed, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the chaotic waters; and we are told that

by his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens (Job 26:13).

Who could be truthfully said to be "eternal" but

the high and holy one that inhabiteth eternity {see Isa. 57:15}?

Is not *eternal* one of the attributes of Godhead? In truest harmony with His Godhead qualities, and co-equal with, and acting together with the Father and the Son, He is called

the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father (John 15:26),

and also

the Spirit of his Son (Gal. 4:6).

Besides, the Spirit is so constantly called "*Holy*," which is a term emphatically applied to God.

I am holy {1 Pet. 1:16}.

Again, we read in Peter concerning the Old Testament scriptures that

holy men of God spake as they were moved by *the Holy Ghost* (2 Pet. 1:21).

Paul also declared,

Well spake *the Holy Ghost* by Esaias the prophet (Acts 28:25),

and yet we are told that it was

the Lord God of Israel (Luke 1: 68)

who

spake by the mouth of his holy prophets (Luke 1:70);

and Isaiah in this same scripture says it was the Lord (Adonahy, Lord in plurality of persons) who gave him the word to say (Isa. 6:8, 9). Is it possible to have clearer testimony to the Godhead of the Holy Ghost?

We read too of His *omnipresence*,

whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell (hades), behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me (Psa. 139:7-10).

His omnipresence is further shown by His dwelling in every child of God all over the earth, and giving to each, in every part of the globe, access unto the Father through the Son.

Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son unto your hearts, crying Abba Father (Gal. 4:6).

For through him we both [believing Jews and Gentiles] have access by one Spirit unto the Father (Eph. 2:18).

His *omniscience* is also clearly set forth in scripture where we are told that

he searcheth *all things*, yea, the deep things of God (1 Cor. 2:10).

Who but a divine Person could search the deep things of God? Again, who would be competent to teach *all things*, unless he knew all things?

His *omnipotence* is constantly witnessed in raising sinners, dead in trespasses and sins, into spiritual life; as it will be by-and-by, when

he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Rom. 8:2, 11).

Who but One who is Almighty could take of the things of Christ and show to every child of God, and help and minister the truth by every gifted servant of the Lord continually? Who but one of Godhead qualities could be said to abide with us *for ever*, to guide into *all* the truth, bring *all* things to our remembrance whatsoever Jesus had said? And of whom could it be said but of One acting in conjunction with the Father and the Son?

All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall shew it unto you (John 14, 16).

Sovereign actings are further characteristics of

the only wise God {1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 1:25},

who acts according to the good pleasure of His will. It was the Holy Ghost who said,

Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them . . . So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed (Acts 13:2-4).

Again,

They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia . . . They assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not (Acts 16:6, 7).

And further in relation to certain spiritual gifts, they are distributed by the Spirit's sovereignty.

To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, . . . But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him (1 Cor. 12:8-18).

We trust that enough scripture testimony has been brought forward to show the Godhead of the Holy Spirit; so that we can easily understand why those who had connected themselves with God's assembly and had said what was false, were spoken of as having lied not to men but to God. Ere this the Holy Ghost had come down, and the assembly was the habitation of God through the Spirit.

Things New and Old, 25:132-136.

The Holy Ghost

No. 2

What an infinitely blessed work must Jesus have accomplished so that the Holy Ghost could come down from heaven, and act and dwell here, in a way He had never done before, as the other Comforter!

We are told that in order to His thus coming, Jesus must be first glorified {see John 7:39, 16:7}.

Then those who believed on Him would receive the Holy Spirit, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7:39).

The coming of the Holy Ghost then is the witness of two things: first, of the eternal efficacy of the blood of His cross, and secondly, of the Son of man being glorified. As to the former, the Holy Ghost is a witness to us by the word of God saying

Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 8:12, 10:17};

and, concerning the latter, His presence here proves that He who is at the right hand of God received the promise of the Father, and shed it forth at the time appointed -- Pentecost. It was then the Holy Ghost came. He was sent down from heaven. Christ having suffered for our sins, risen out of death and gone into heaven as Man, the Holy Ghost could come down and indwell those who had been washed from their sins in the Savior's blood (Acts ii. 33).

Prior to this there were true believers who had been born again, had their sins forgiven, were children of God, to whom Jesus could say,

My Father, and your Father; My God, and your God {see John 20:17},

and they also had risen life breathed into them by the risen Savior; but they were not sealed, not anointed, not in liberty, and not members of the body of Christ. The contrast is strikingly seen between the state of these saints in the first of Acts, and their state a few days after in the second of Acts. What an amazing change the gift of the Holy Ghost produced! And when you consider who the Holy Ghost is, is it surprising that it should be so?

It is not only that the Son of God has come, but that the Holy Ghost has come. But when the Son came, He took flesh, and was found here in fashion as a man. Not so, however, the Holy Ghost. He did not take flesh; He is not seen and known as Jesus was, and this is why the unconverted know nothing of Him --

Whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (John 14:17).

But the importance of the Holy Spirit being here, and given of God to all them that obey Him, can scarcely be over-estimated. This is why, after the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, you do

not find in scripture such an idea as the Lord's people praying *for* the Spirit. Such a thought as "Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly dove," has no place there; because He has come. *Before* He came it was right enough to pray for the Spirit, for our Lord had said,

how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him (Luke 11:13);

and He commanded His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem until they were

endued with power from on high {Luke 24:49};

they were to wait for the promise of the Father. That the Spirit when He came taught them to cry

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20},

in the consciousness of having redemption in Christ and through His blood, and the earnest of the Spirit, is quite true; but for such to be praying *for* the Spirit, after He had come, would surely be subversive of the foundation principles of Christianity. Hence the uncertainty and confusion of mind of many believers in our days.

But what was the coming of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost? Was it the coming of a divine Person, or of an emanation from God, or of a measure of the Spirit, or of an influence, or what? Scripture, as we have seen, speaks of Him as a Person, having personal qualities and personal actings. Some of His sovereign actings we have already noticed. But though the holy Ghost be a divine Person, yet He is not the Son, for the Son took flesh and died for us, and the Holy Ghost did neither. Nor is He the Father, for He was

the promise of the Father {Acts 1:4},

and was sent by the Father, as Jesus said,

whom the Father will send in my name {John 14:26}.

And yet He is a Person.

The personal qualities and actings of the Holy Ghost are largely set forth in scripture. He is described as speaking, leading, guiding, teaching, bearing witness, showing, searching, interceding, appointing to office, abiding with us for ever, and yet, as we have seen, this holy Person is divine. Hence, too, there is that on earth, which is God's habitation through the Spirit --

the house of God {Eph. 2:22}.

The gift of the Holy Ghost, then, is not merely an influence, though He does influence, not an emanation from God, though He was sent by the Father and the Son; for Jesus said,

whom the Father will send {John 14:26},

and

whom I will send {John 15:26};

but He is a Person who carries out His will,

dividing to every man severally as he will {1 Cor. 12:11},

and though not the Father, nor the Son, yet One in the mysteriously divine essence of One God -- Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It was He who spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began. It was He who

moved upon the face of the waters {Gen. 1:2}

before it was said;

Let there be light: and there was light {Gen. 1:3}.

It was the same Spirit which strove with men before the flood. It was the same Spirit of God who filled and qualified Bezaleel with wisdom and understanding to make those things for the tabernacle which were types and shadows of Jesus. It was the same Spirit by which the holy scriptures were given by inspiration of God, so that the writers could say,

Thus saith the Lord {Isa. 7:7; Jer. 2:2; Ezek. 2:4, &c.},

The word of the Lord came {Jonah 1:1; Hag. 2:20, &c.},

The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue {2 Sam. 23:2};

for holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. It was the same Holy Ghost who came upon Mary when it pleased God to send His Son into the world born of a woman. It was the same Spirit who spake of Christ by Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna. It was the same Spirit which John saw descending like a dove and remaining on the sacred, spotless Person of Jesus when He was baptized. It is of Him, too, it is said,

How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost . . . : who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him {Acts 10:38}.

It was by the same eternal Spirit that He offered Himself without spot to God; and when He was raised from among the dead, we are told that He was

quickened by the Spirit {1 Pet. 3:18}.

Again, we are told, that after His resurrection and going in and out among His disciples, it was through the Holy Ghost He gave commandments unto the apostles whom He had chosen: and bade them wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Father, for they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. And when He, as Man, was glorified at the right hand of God, He received the Holy Ghost and gave to His waiting saints on earth.

Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear (Acts :33).

Then the Holy Ghost came, He was

sent down from heaven {1 Pet. 1:12};

and, blessed be God, here He is still, and will abide with us for ever.

It was not a measure of the Spirit, but the Person of the Holy Spirit. We read that

God giveth not the Spirit by measure (John 3:34).

The idea is entirely subversive of the great truth of God the Holy Ghost being in us and with us. A moment's consideration of the thoughtful Christian is sufficient to make this clear. Then was the baptism of the Holy Ghost, for we read

By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles (1 Cor. 12:13).

It was the formation of

one body

on earth, of which Christ is the Head in heaven. Wondrous work! Who but a divine Person could be sufficient to unite all believers on earth to Christ the Head in heaven, and to one another in

one body?

It was done by the coming of the Holy Ghost. Precious mystery of divine grace, and power, and wisdom! If, then, it be so, that the Holy Ghost Himself is here, and in us, and we have seen that He giveth not the Spirit by measure, how could we ask for a further measure of the Spirit? Impossible that an intelligent God-fearing soul could do so! And if the scripture teaching of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is the formation on earth of all believers into one body, how could we ask for a fresh baptism of the Spirit? Could the

one body

be formed by

one Spirit

over and over again? Far be the thought! Could we, then, we ask with all solemnity, be approaching God with reverence and godly fear to express such a desire? This was the Pentecostal blessing, and when the body was formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we know what wonderful power accompanied the gospel testimony, so that thousands were converted in one day.

Yes, the Holy Ghost is here on earth, and, blessed be God, those who have believed on the Son of God and received remission of sins, are indwelt by Him. We are sealed, anointed, have an unction of the Holy One, and the earnest of our inheritance, and all this until when? Let us not fail to mark

until the redemption of the purchased possession {Eph. 1:14}

--

unto the day of redemption {Eph. 4:30},

when we shall bodily enter into heavenly glory. Yes, to abide with us for ever, as Jesus said,

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever: the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you {John 14:16, 17}.

We must be careful not to confound the work of the Spirit in us when we were brought as sinners to a Savior -- born anew -- and received eternal life, with the gift of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter to take up His abode in us. They are two distinct lines of scripture teaching. That a man must be born again to

see

or

enter into the kingdom of God {John 3:3, 5},

was clearly laid down by our Lord Himself. But when such have been born again, and have remission of sins, then the Holy Ghost is sent into our hearts. In Ephesians it is,

After that ye believed ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise {Eph. 1:13};

and in Galatians it is said,

Because ye are sons [sons first], God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father {Gal. 4:6}.

Thus we see the Spirit is given to believers, to children of God, not to sinners in their sins, but to those who have remission of sins

--

to them that obey him {Acts 5:32}.

The promise of the gift of the Spirit formed a prominent point in the preaching of the apostles. On the day of Pentecost, Peter's reply to those Jews who were awakened with a deep sense of their guilt was,

Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost {Acts 2:38}.

Again, at Cæsarea, when Peter addressed quickened Gentiles who were told by an angel that they would hear words of Peter whereby they would be saved, we can understand that the moment God's way of peace was proclaimed they would receive it. And so it was. Looking with intense interest at the apostle for the very words which would give them salvation, the moment he spoke of remission of sins the Holy Ghost was given to them, and they all spake with tongues, so that Peter's preaching was stopped. But it is important to see that in both these instances the gift of the Holy Ghost was connected with remission of sins; and Christ at the right hand of God, who had been crucified, was presented to the hearers as the Object of faith.

As has often been remarked, the twofold testimony of the Baptist was that Jesus was

the Lamb of God {John 1:29, 36}

and the One which

baptizeth with the Holy Ghost {John 1:33}.

This John knew Him to be by

the Spirit descending, and remaining on him {John 1:33}.

The Son was thus declared to be so spotless and pure that the Father could seal Him as man; the Holy Spirit could remain on Him and anoint Him in virtue of His own intrinsic excellencies. Not so us. Before the Spirit could seal and anoint us, we needed to be washed from our sins in the blood of Christ. Now dwelling in us, He makes us know that we are children of God, that we are in Christ and Christ in us, and the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.

Things New and Old 25:156-164.

The Holy Ghost

No. 3

We have already briefly glanced at the Godhead, personality, indwelling, and some of the operations of the Holy Ghost. We shall now, as the Lord may enable us, look further into the scripture teaching of the dwelling of this divine Person in the believer, and also in the church on earth.

1. THE HOLY GHOST IN THE BELIEVER,

as we have seen, follows remission of sins; for though He may, and does, work in sinners to bring them to Jesus, for cleansing by His precious blood, yet, when one is born again, has received remission of sins, he is

clean every whit {John 13:10};

so that, because the vessel is cleansed in God's sight, the Holy Ghost can come, and be in us for ever. Thus the believer is

sealed {Eph. 1:13},

marked by God as His; and has the

earnest {Eph. 1:14}

of the inheritance, the pledge of certainly having that eternal glory to which he is called. The Holy Ghost is therefore given to him until he is actually and bodily brought to God --

the redemption of the purchased possession {Eph. 1:14}.

All of His grace, and therefore all will be

unto the praise of his glory (Eph. 1:14).

By the same Spirit, too, he is

anointed {2 Cor. 1:21, 22},

set apart and qualified for the service of God; and, as in the type of the consecration of the priests, the anointing with oil followed the sprinkling of the blood, so (as we have noticed before), in Acts 10 {43, 44}, the gift of the Holy Ghost immediately followed remission of sins, and we know that

without shedding of blood is no remission {Heb. 9:22}.

It is then a point of all importance, that we should clearly understand that one aspect of the gift of the Holy Ghost is, that He is God's *witness* to the sin-cleansing virtues of the blood of Jesus. He is also God's *gift* to them that obey Him, God's *seal* to the eternal efficacy of the one offering which was once offered by His own Son, God's *anointing* for His service.

So clearly is His indwelling in the believer taught in scripture, that on one occasion the saints were asked,

Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God? {1 Cor. 6:19}

Had they realised this, they would not have used their bodies for unholy purposes. It is our persons that Christ redeemed; so that, though, as to our souls,

we have redemption {Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14}

in Christ, and through His blood, we look for the Savior, who shall change our vile bodies; and we are told that our mortal bodies will yet be quickened by His Spirit which dwelleth in us. Not only is this truth eminently sanctifying, but also full of

comfort, when thinking of our bodies of humiliation. The Holy Ghost, then, who, as to our souls, has already brought to us eternal life in Christ --

the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus {Rom. 8:2}

-- has also taken up His abode in our *bodies*. Again, we find our HEARTS are spoken of as to where the Spirit has come to dwell in God's children.

Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your *hearts*, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6).

We might have thought, unless the word had been so very explicit, that the Spirit would have dwelt in the new nature. Not so; He forms the new nature, so that we are born again by the incorruptible seed, the word of God, and thus brought to the Son of God, who was crucified for sinners, that we might have eternal life in believing on Him, and thus be newly created in Christ Jesus; but, this being so, He comes and dwells in our "hearts," our "bodies," and strengthens the new nature, for the Holy Spirit is the power for all communion, service, and testimony. The apostle therefore prays that we may

be strengthened with might by his Spirit in *the inner man* (Eph. 3:16),

and that we might be filled

with all joy and peace in believing,

and

abound in hope, through the *power* of the Holy Ghost (Rom. 15:13).

How wonderful, then, is God's own testimony to the eternal efficacy of the one offering of the body of Christ, and how blessed the thought that this other Comforter is to abide with us for ever!

Among His many blessed operations in us, we may notice that He is

the Spirit of adoption {Rom. 8:15},

so that we may have the feelings and activities within us of those who have been brought into the endearing relationship of children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. He thus bears witness with our spirit (or, new nature, if we may so speak) that we are the children of God; and He also cries within us, Abba, Father.

Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father {Rom. 8:15}.

It is by the gift of the Spirit we know our relationship, and the blessed liberty of it, with the Father.

Beloved, now are we the children of God {see 1 John 3:2}.

We have not, then, received a servile spirit, giving us dread and a slavish fear, which hath torment; but the spirit of adoption which produces filial reverence and fear, lest we grieve and dishonour Him; and a childlike confidence in Him who has, in such grace, brought us so near, so very near, to Himself in Christ, and through His precious blood. Neither have we received the spirit of the world, that we should be more successful worldlings, or be

able to fight with their weapons, and excel in their doings. Far from it; it is God's Spirit, that we might have intelligence and power to act according to God -- to be imitators of God as dear children.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God {1 Cor. 2:12}.

Nor have we received the spirit of fear, to crush us under a sense of our own weakness and many infirmities, to cast us inward on our own barrenness and poverty, and thus fill us with fearful apprehensions and gloom. No, these things are not the fruit of the Spirit in us. Though He reproves sin, and at times may deal with us so as to bring us before God in humiliation and self-judgment, yet He points us to a triumphant Christ, a glorified Man, a coming Savior, Lord of all, as the One in whom all our resources are. Thus He draws out our hearts after Christ and His interests. He bids us to consider Him, lest we grow weary and faint, and to look off unto Him, lest we fail to run with patience the race that is set before us.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7).

Is it not, then, clearly set forth that those who are taught and guided by the Holy Ghost will not have a servile state of heart, a spirit of bondage and dread? Neither will they be worldly-minded, nor will they be timid and fearful; but, while serving the Lord with all humility of mind, they will be of good courage, loving in their ways, obedient to the Father's will, intelligent as to His mind, sound in doctrine, and will manifest a divine power with their service and testimony.

It is by the Holy Ghost having come, consequent upon the accomplished work of Jesus, that the deep things of God are now revealed {1 Cor. 2:10}.

Prophets had in the knowledge of these things, and they knew they had not; for we find one saying,

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him {1 Cor. 2:9};

but an apostle could add the precious truth,

but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God {1 Cor. 2:10, 11}.

So utterly dark is man naturally as to divine things, that nothing less than the revelation and power of the Spirit of God can enable him to receive them.

The natural man (educated, uneducated, moral or profane) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned {1 Cor. 2:14}.

Nor are we competent to make the things of God known to others but by the Holy Ghost.

Which things also we SPEAK, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but *which the Holy Ghost teacheth*, comparing spiritual things with spiritual {1 Cor. 2:13},

or communicating spiritual things by spiritual means. If, then, we can neither know, receive, nor communicate spiritual things but by

the Holy Ghost, it is also equally clear that the Holy Spirit is given to us to fill us with such intelligence that

we might know the things which are freely given to us of God {1 Cor. 2:12},

be able to receive them, and give them out to others (1 Cor. 2). Were these statements of scripture received into our hearts in simple faith, how entirely and habitually we should be cast upon the power and operations of the Holy Ghost!

Things New and Old 25:188-193.

The Holy Ghost

No. 4

The Holy Ghost having taken up His abode in the believer, he is thus united to Christ, who is at the right hand of God. And what a wonderful thing for every child of God on earth now to know, that he is actually united to Christ in heaven, as a divinely-wrought fact! Present union with Christ! One spirit with the Lord, for we are told that

he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit {1 Cor. 6:17}.

How amazing the grace of God, who beheld us in our vile and loathsome state as sinners of the Gentiles, and cleansed us, quickened us, and united us by His Holy Spirit to the Lord Jesus Christ! We have this marvelous union, not by faith, as is sometimes stated, though we are believers; nor even in life, though Christ is our life; but by the coming of the Holy Ghost into our hearts, in consequence of our being washed from our sins in the blood of Jesus. We surely do well to ponder carefully in God's presence this amazing truth; so true is it, that Jesus in the glory speaks of us as part of Himself --

Me {see Acts 9:4}

-- and the Holy Ghost says that

we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones
{Eph. 5:30}.

It is the consciousness of the reality of this union that necessarily attracts us to the Lord, keeps us clinging to Him, to find our all in Him, and therefore detaches us from a thousand things which many esteem to be good, because they are unsuited to Him with whom we are for ever joined by

one Spirit {1 Cor. 6:17}.

Has the christian reader received this divine truth, that

by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body
(1 Cor. 12:13)?

-- that you yourself are now so one with Christ, that if you are persecuted, He could say to your persecutor,

Why persecutest thou ME? (Acts 9:4).

Have you, beloved reader, the consciousness in your own soul that because you have been washed from your sins in the blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit has taken up His abode in your heart for ever, and united you to Christ in heaven? It may be possible that you have never heard of this great truth before, or, even if you have known it, you may have little consciousness of its reality, because of your fleshly and worldly walk so grieving the Spirit; still, it is even then blessed to come before God in self-examination, self-judgment, and, it may be, self-loathing, and thus have soul-restoration; and, believing God's testimony, and walking in His presence, have the precious comfort, not only that

as Christ is, so are we in this world {see 1 John 4:17}

(a most blessed truth), but that you are now on earth for ever united to the Lord in heaven by His Spirit which He hath given us. That every christian reader of these pages may have the certainty and unspeakable enjoyment of being one with the Lord Jesus, is

our heart's desire and earnest prayer to the Father of mercies and God of all comfort!

It is because we have the Spirit that we

know the things that are freely given to us of God
{1 Cor. 2:12},

that we have to do with an ascended, glorified Savior, consciously stand in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and intelligently worship and give thanks.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty
{1 Cor. 3:17}.

In this way the believer knows that he is not now in his sins, not in the flesh, not of the world, not under law, but justified from all things, has eternal life, is a child of God, has received the Holy Ghost, and is a member of the body of Christ, thus able to serve acceptably, and worship the Father in spirit and in truth. Thus the gift of the Holy Ghost to the believer is connected with knowledge, liberty, communion, enjoyment, worship, and power. The difference is strikingly seen in comparing the state of believers in the first chapter of the Acts with their state in the second and fourth chapters.

Among other operations of the Holy Ghost, we may notice that He bears witness to the Son of God --

He shall testify of me (John 15:26).

Thus the Holy Spirit brings before our souls the personal glory and perfections of the Son, His moral excellencies, His finished work on the cross, the various offices which He now sustains, and the ranges of glory yet to be revealed to His eternal praise and honour. He may direct our thoughts back to consider his eternal Sonship, and lead us to contemplate Him by whom the worlds were made. He may recall to our memories His God-glorifying work of redemption in the *past*, or direct the eye of our heart to Jesus at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour, where we see Him for the *present*. Or, He may lead us to contemplate Him in the *future*, when He will come forth as the rightful Heir of all things to establish His kingdom in righteousness, wearing His many crowns. The Holy Spirit may testify of Him as the One in heaven, to whom angels, authorities, and powers are made subject; He may at one time lead our thoughts back to His perfections in this world as the rejected One, and then to Him as the reigning One, to whom every knee must bow. He may minister to us the marvelous relationship He holds as the Head of His body the church, the offices He sustains as our great High Priest, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, and our Advocate with the Father, and give us also to contemplate the time of blessing yet to come, when He shall be welcomed and honoured on earth as King of Israel and Governor among the nations. At one time the Holy Ghost may give us to delight in Him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and at another to look forward to our reigning with Him, and to His executing the most solemn judgments on the living and on the dead. So that, whether the Holy Ghost occupy us with the past,

present, or future, things heavenly or earthly, He is the Testifier of the Son, who is the central object of all God's counsels, grace, and glory! We may be certain, therefore, that no ministry can be characterised as of the Holy Ghost, if the Lord Jesus Christ be not the pre-eminent subject and object of its testimony. How blessed, then, it is to know this, and to experience in our souls this grand effect of the Spirit dwelling in us, that He testifies to us of the Son! In no other way can we account for that untold blessedness which we enjoy when our minds and hearts are taken up with Him, and when His perfectness, accomplished work, His offices and His fulness, are brought home to our hearts!

The Holy Ghost is also the Glorifier of the Son, as He said,

He shall glorify me (John 16:14).

He presents Him as worthy of all praise. His excellencies make everything else seem poor. His worthiness will by-and-by call forth the praises of every creature in heaven, in earth, and under the earth. But even now, in this sin-blighted world, the Holy Ghost so reveals Him, that hearts are attuned to sing His praise. To many now on earth His name is above every name, and to their hearts He has the pre-eminence in all things, because the Holy Spirit has revealed to them something of His surpassing excellencies and worth. Yes, He is the Glorifier of the Son of God, the Spirit of truth, who guides into all the truth. He tells us of Him as God's only-begotten Son, as the Creator of the world, that Eternal Life which was with the Father, the Object of the worship of all the angels, the Light of men, the Savior of all that believe in his name, the One to whom all judgment is committed, at whose name every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess. Thus is He ever to be adored and praised, for He is worthy.

The Holy Ghost does not speak from Himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: . . . He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show unto you {see John 16:13-15}.

It is because all that the Father hath the Son hath also, that the Holy Ghost reveals the most precious things of the Father and of the Son to us.

The Holy Ghost also reveals the truth to us as to coming events --

He will shew you things to come {John 16:13}.

To shut out, therefore, from our minds the testimony of scripture as to prophetic events, would be to resist this blessed ministry of the Holy Spirit. And observe, that it is the Spirit who shows us the future. No power of the natural intellect, apart from divine teaching, is sufficient for this. One thing is certain -- that the same Spirit which is given to us, and cries, Abba, Father, also says, Come, Lord Jesus.

The Spirit and the bride say, Come (Rev. 2:17).

It is, then, a most serious matter when souls, even if they do not oppose the doctrine of the Lord's coming as the believer's hope, yet, if they do not accept it as the divinely-given hope, they are clearly shown to be not in the mind of the Holy Ghost.

We read, too, of

joy in the Holy Ghost {Rom. 14:17};

for if He be here to testify of the Son, to glorify Him, and to show us things to come, He must surely be thus keeping our hearts near the never-failing springs of divine grace. We know that the Father Himself loves us -- yea, that He loves us as He has loved His Son. Thus, being objects of divine favour, brought to Him in Christ, and through His precious blood, accepted in the Beloved, and His co-heirs, and all kept fresh in our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost, we know such a deep, calm joy, as makes us look for the coming of our Lord to introduce us into that fulness of joy which His presence only can give.

When we are enjoined to

be filled with the Spirit {Eph. 5:18},

it is clear that it is not having more of the Spirit given to us; for, as we have seen, God does not give the Spirit by measure, but He gives us the Holy Ghost Himself. We read, therefore, that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. As long as a Christian is encouraging fleshly and worldly lusts, he cannot be filled with the Spirit, for the Spirit is grieved; but when the believer is self-judged, and holds himself dead with Christ, instead of being occupied with self and worldly lusts, he becomes wholly occupied with Christ. Every faculty of his heart and mind is taken up with the Lord Jesus Christ; he is filled with the Spirit. The admonition of scripture, therefore, is,

Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess

-- fleshly lusts --

but be filled with the Spirit {Eph. 5:18}.

Things New and Old 25:209-216.

The Holy Ghost

No. 5

We are familiar with the truth, that every believer on the Son of God has eternal life. It is a totally new life. By the actings of the word and Spirit on his heart and conscience, he has looked to the Son of man who was lifted up -- the only-begotten Son whom God gave -- and he has eternal life. He has life in the Spirit. It is not an improvement of the old nature, but a new nature; for

that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit {John 3:6};

but, because the believer is born of God, and therefore God's child, the Holy Spirit is sent into his heart to abide with him for ever (Gal. 4:6). Thus the believer is born of the Spirit first, and then indwelt by the Spirit; and it is important to distinguish between these two actings of the Holy Spirit.

It is because the child of God has the Spirit that he is enjoined to walk in the Spirit,

for then he will

not fulfil the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).

We have, then, another power in us and for us, which is entirely opposed to the flesh, and, walking in this power, fleshly lusts will not come out; but this scripture clearly shows that, though the believer is born again, he still has the flesh in him, and in its very nature it is opposed as much as ever to God. Hence we read,

the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye should not do the things which ye desire {see Gal. 5:17, also see New Trans., JND}.

We have, then, as we have said, a new nature and a new power -- the Holy Spirit -- to walk in that path which is pleasing to God; when this is the case the Lord will occupy our hearts, we shall be seeking to act for His glory, we shall think of His interests, and the written word will instruct us. It is a path which is entirely beyond the wisdom of the natural man, because prompted and marked out by the Spirit of God. If one speaks of being

in the Spirit on the Lord's day {Rev. 1:10},

we understand that his thoughts and affections were flowing on in the current of the Spirit; and when we are enjoined to

walk in the Spirit {Gal. 5:16, 25},

it calls upon us to hearken to the word of God, and obey it in all things, and at all costs. In this holy atmosphere fleshly lusts cannot intrude.

The child of God, then, is to give himself up to the leading of Another. It is characteristic of him that he does so; for

as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God (Rom. 8:14).

A blind man is glad of some one who can see to take him by the hand, and lead Him; for he is afraid to take a step, unless he is conscious that a competent person is guiding him. Another person, sensible of his thorough ignorance, looks out for some one to teach him, like the eunuch, to whom Philip said,

Understandest thou what thou readest?

He replied,

How can I, except some man should guide me? {Acts 8:30, 31}.

And so a Christian, who is sensible of his own helplessness and ignorance, looks for some One to lead and teach him, and for these things, among many others, the Holy Ghost has been given unto him. And one thing we may be sure of is, that He ministers Christ to our souls, and never leads us into a path of legality or fleshly confidence; for

if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under law (Gal. 5:18).

It is both interesting and profitable to notice that it was to the Galatian believers, who had slipped away from the doctrines of grace, that an apostle was inspired to write so much about the actings of the Holy Ghost.

Here it may be well for the christian reader to pause, and ask the question, What do I know in my own soul about these things? Being conscious of the gift of the Holy Ghost, by whom the love of God has been shed abroad in my heart, do I know what it is to yield myself up to His leading and teaching, and to walk in that path which is according to His mind? We do well to see how much we have accepted of these marvelous teachings of scripture about the operations of the Spirit of God, and how far we have learned, by personal exercise in God's presence, their reality and power.

Few things can be more opposed to each other than

the fruit of the Spirit {Gal. 5:22}

and

the works of the flesh {Gal. 5:19}.

The former are like the excellencies of Christ -- love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance. A precious cluster of fruit. All were found perfect, and each in its season, in the Lord Jesus. Some of the works of the flesh are loathsome, others quiet in their activities, and even esteemed by some, such as emulations, and revellings, and such like. Others have a religious, or superstitious character, such as idolatry and witchcraft. Still, they are all so evil in God's sight, that

they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-23).

The comfort of the Holy Ghost {Acts 9:31} is most precious. The troubled and cast-down child of God has often known it in a very especial manner. The consciousness we have in passing through a scene where Jesus had

not where to lay his head {Matt. 8:20},

and was hated without a cause -- a scene which yields nothing for our souls, and where everything is against us -- of One pointing us to the glorified Son of man, bringing His sweet words, finished work, triumphant resurrection, and session at the right hand of God, to our souls, is very precious. To find, too, the same Spirit bringing home to our hearts, as we need, the various offices in

which He is constantly occupied for us in heaven, as Shepherd, Overseer, Priest, Advocate, and Washer of our feet, is comforting indeed. And more than these things, He takes of the things of the Father and the Son, their intercourse about us, the Father giving us to the Son, and the Son so owning us as His as to lay down His life for us, and so keeping us, that we can never perish, and such like truths, are precious indeed.

The communion of the Holy Ghost {2 Cor. 13:14}

is also most blessed, for not only does He give us to know our relationship with the Father and the Son, (wonderful to think of!) but He enables us to enjoy this precious fellowship.

We are more familiar with

the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
and with
the love of God {2 Cor. 13:14},

than with the precious reality of

the communion of the Holy Ghost.

Why is this? Because we try to satisfy ourselves with as low a standard of Christianity as we can, provided evil do not break out in some open dishonour to the Lord.

The communion of the Holy Ghost

is a secret known only to the heart that enjoys it. Its effects, no doubt, are seen by others, but the sweet privilege itself is better tasted than described.

Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ {1 John 1:3},

saints of old were wont to say. They knew no other standard of Christianity than having thoughts, delights, and rest in common with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Marvelous blessedness! But how could the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us give us a lower standard, or minister anything less in quality to those who are children of God? Impossible. In this way, we can, by the truth and Spirit, enter into the Father's counsels, ways, delight, and rest in His well-beloved Son, and in the Father's love and care of all His saints. We can also enter into the Son's love to the Father, and His love and care for every member of His body, and into the various offices which He sustains on our behalf. Surely we could not have anything higher, and the heart may well ask, Will there ever be anything beyond this? Here, compassed with infirmity, our measure may be very small, but it is the same communion of the Holy Ghost which we shall throughout eternity enjoy. In our next we hope to consider what scripture teaches concerning the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the church.

Things New and Old 25:242-247.

The Holy Ghost

No. 6

The Dwelling of The Holy Ghost in The Church

Whatever intercourse God was pleased to hold with Abraham and others, we never read of God *dwelling among* people till they had been under the shelter and blessing of the blood of the lamb. When the people of Israel had been *redeemed* out of Egypt, and the tabernacle was set up, with its altar and priesthood, then Jehovah said,

I will *dwell among* the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may *dwell among them* (Ex. 29:44-46).

Thus God took His place *among* His redeemed people.

Again we read, that when Solomon had built the temple,

the cloud filled the house of Jehovah; so that the priests could not stand to minister, because of the cloud, for the glory of Jehovah had filled the house of Jehovah. Then spake Solomon . . . I have surely built thee a house *to dwell in*, a settled place for thee to abide for ever (1 Kings 8:10-13).

In the days of our Lord, He Himself was the *temple*. He said,

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up . . . He spake of the temple of his body (John 2:19, 21).

The Holy Ghost had come down in bodily shape as a dove, and abode upon Him, so that Jesus was then *the temple of God*.

But when Jesus was raised from the dead, He taught His disciples to wait for the coming of the Holy Ghost, by whom they would be baptized and receive power. Therefore, on the day of

Pentecost the Holy Ghost came down, as a rushing mighty wind, and filled the house where they were sitting, and filled all the waiting believers. Then the believers were, and still are, God's dwelling place -- His *habitation*. The appearance of cloven tongues like as of fire sitting upon each of them, plainly showed that the ministry of the word, with power, would be the special character of their testimony.

Two things, we find, then took place. The body was formed by all the believers being united to Christ and to one another, and thus became

members of his body {Eph. 5:30},

and

members one of another {Rom. 12:5};

there was also then a vessel on earth set in responsibility to the Lord. Both the church, or assembly, looked at as *the body* of Christ, and the assembly looked at as in the place of corporate responsibility to the Lord -- *the house*, were identical at first; but it soon became otherwise.

The body

then is formed by the Holy Ghost, and composed only of true believers:

By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body {1 Cor. 12:13}.

It is the assembly in its true sense, that which Christ builds. We do not read in scripture of the Holy Ghost dwelling in the body, but dwelling in each individual child of God that forms the body, and energising every activity of it, as well as dwelling in the church on earth.

But when sin came into the assembly, did the Holy Ghost leave it? Certainly not; instead of leaving it, He gave power to judge the evil and put it away (Acts 5). And when men brought in, as at Corinth, the greatest disorder, false people, and flagrant sins, both moral and doctrinal, did the Holy Ghost leave the assembly on earth? Certainly not. For in 1 Cor. 3 the Apostle says to these very people, when looking at the assembly on earth in the place of responsibility,

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Cor. 3:16).

And then he solemnly adds,

If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy (1 Cor. 3:17).

It is obvious that this responsible assembly on earth is a widely different aspect from

the assembly which is his body, the fulness of him which filleth all in all (Eph. 1:23).

We find then in scripture two aspects of the church: one as God's workmanship *living members of Christ's body*, always perfect before God, which no power of evil can sever or destroy; the other, the assembly in man's hands, into which he has brought wood, hay, and stubble, and much that defiles. This is evidently *the house*, which is already being judged, for

judgment must begin at the house of God {1 Pet. 4:17};

it is Christ's witness on earth, which has proved so unfaithful that He will spue it out of His mouth. There is an important and wide difference between

the body

and

the house

--

an habitation of God through the Spirit {Eph. 2:22}.

It is interesting to notice that while Peter speaks of

the house of God (1 Pet. 4:17)

as where judgment begins, he also speaks of the house in a good sense, as composed of living stones and built up

a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5),

a holy priesthood and a royal priesthood. Paul also, who is the only inspired writer on

the body,

not only speaks of the temple in a bad sense, and capable of being defiled as we have seen, but he also uses the figure of a temple for the assembly in a good sense, as growing into an holy temple in the Lord (1 Cor. 3:16, 17; Eph. 2:21). In this paper, however, we shall confine our remarks on the house as profession, or the assembly on earth in the aspect of what it is in man's hands; and

the body

as God's workmanship.

The house, as we have seen, good at first and identical with *the body*, is the habitation of God through the Spirit. It is not correct then to say that the Spirit is only with us when gathered together in the Lord's name, for He is always dwelling in the whole church; but it is quite true that the Lord, who loved us and gave Himself for us, is specially present when so gathered in His name. Neither is it scriptural to say that when thus gathered we wait on the Spirit; but it would be truer to say that we wait on the Lord who acts among us and in us by the Spirit. Of this we have examples in scripture. In the epistles to the seven churches in the Revelation, the Lord is the speaker, and the One who gave John authority to write to the different assemblies, and yet they were all enjoined to hearken to what the Spirit was saying to every one of the assemblies. Seven times it is said,

He that hath an ear, let him hear what *the Spirit saith* unto the churches {Rev. 2 and 3},

or assemblies. Again, in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts, we find saints who were before the Lord, looking to Him, for we are told that they

ministered to the Lord, and fasted,

and then and there

the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them {Acts 13:2}.

May we not then, if waiting on the Lord, expect the guidance of the Holy Ghost?

Scripture speaks of each believer in the Lord Jesus Christ having the Holy Ghost, and a member of the body of Christ; but when we consider the indwelling of the Holy Ghost collectively, we have a sphere wider now than the

one body,

for a state is contemplated where there are bad materials as well as good, such as wood, hay, and stubble, as well as gold, silver, and precious stones. It is that too which man is capable of defiling, and which is going to be judged -- the house. We find these two aspects of the church constantly recognised in the epistles.

1. What it is in the Lord's hands, what He has formed for His glory, called

the church,

or assembly,

which is His body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:22).

Here there is no failure, and can be no separation, it is always intact before God, and by faith to us also.

2. What the church is in man's hands as God's laborers and workmen who have brought in bad materials, and much that is for the Lord's dishonour. This is what we understand by the house. Those who have been baptized by the Holy Ghost and thus united to Christ are in the

one body;

but those who are merely professors belong to the house. We are all in

the house,

and are called, at the discovery of being associated with vessels to dishonour, not to leave the house (how can we till Christ comes?) but to purge ourselves from such vessels by separating from them.

It has been sometimes said, Can it be possible that the Holy Spirit dwells where there is evil? It is not an unreasonable question, and one which is easily answered. Going back to the time of God's dwelling among the people of Israel, did He leave them when evil came in? He might rebuke it, as He surely did, and execute discipline; but notwithstanding all this unbelief; their lustings, murmurings, and rebellions, the pillar of fire by night and the cloud by day remained

with them throughout all the journey (see Ex. 40:38).

We read,

Thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. Thou gavest also Thy good Spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not Thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness (Neh. 9:19-21).

Even after ten tribes had been given into their enemies' hands, and a handful of the two tribes who had been in captivity returned in Ezra's time, the word of the prophet Haggai to them was,

I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not {Hag. 2:4, 5}.

Again. Look at an individual believer; does the Spirit leave him who has, like the Galatians, got away from the ground of divine grace, and who is practically manifesting the works of the flesh? On the contrary, did not Paul appeal to their consciences by this very truth, saying,

Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? {Gal. 3:2}.

That the Spirit may be so grieved and quenched, that there may be little consciousness of His indwelling and power, no one doubts; but the clear teaching of scripture is that each believer is sealed with the holy Spirit of promise until he is brought home to glory. (See Eph. 1:14; 4:30.) Even when a believer sins, does the Holy Ghost leave him? Though we are enjoined not to sin, yet where is there an idea in scripture that the Holy Ghost leaves the believer because he sins? Are we not told that

If any man [child of God] sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous {1 John 2:1}?

And in connection with His gracious Advocacy, does not the Holy Spirit in the believer lead him to self-judgment, and confession of his sins? No doubt the Spirit of God is "holy," and cannot look on evil with any allowance, yet, as born of the Spirit, and cleansed and perfected for ever by the one offering of the body of Christ, the child of God must ever be an object of His gracious ministry and care.

And if so with the individual believer, why should we expect Him to leave God's church on earth because of its evil associations and dishonour to the Lord? On the contrary, does He not rebuke the evil, enable the faithful soul to discern it, and to purge himself from vessels to dishonour by separating from them?

All through the dark ages, His power was seen every now and then put forth. His habitation on earth is His habitation still. That the Holy Ghost remains among us is a most cheering and encouraging truth. Having been given consequent upon the accomplished work and glorification of Jesus, He abides, and will do so until the members of the body are taken to glory at the coming of the Lord. Then that which remains behind will be judicially dealt with.

Things New and Old 25:268-275.

The Holy Ghost

No. 7

When believers are really gathered together to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing is clearer to such than the presence and operations of the Holy Ghost. As we have seen, those who are conscious of the Lord's being in the midst and are occupied with Him, will prove the guidance and ministry of the Holy Ghost in various ways. It is truly a place of wonderful favour and blessing. And yet, if we quietly think the matter over, there can be but two kinds of activities on such occasions -- man, and the Holy Ghost; so that all that is done at such meetings will be either in fleshly or spiritual energy. If the former, however attractive to the hearers, it will not profit, as our Savior said,

The flesh profiteth nothing {John 6:63}.

For all then that is God-glorifying, and for real blessing to souls, we are cast entirely upon the Lord. Many, no doubt, will acknowledge the correctness of these principles; but we need grace, that grace which is always connected with thorough self-distrust, and looks to the Lord for every good thing, in order to know the power of the Holy Ghost.

To those who habitually in private life take the place of dependence on the Holy Ghost, it becomes simple enough to do so when gathered together in the Lord's name. If we cultivate the habit of reading the word when alone, in the consciousness of entire dependence on the Holy Ghost, to reveal and minister to us the deep things of God, if we are found, too, in our closets

praying in the Holy Ghost {Jude 20},

we become so sensible of the blessedness of His help and guidance, that, when gathered together, His working and power are at once looked for. And it is a solemn question whether the chief reason why the forward actings of the flesh, or the more quiet movements of intellectualism, so show themselves at assembly meetings, instead of the holy activities of the Spirit, is not because He is not better known to souls, and more honoured in private walk and ways.

However charitable we may be, it is impossible to accept everything that transpires at such meetings as being of the Holy Ghost. It ought to be so. It may be that sometimes in the same meeting there may be much that is of the Spirit, yet some things out of place, and so out of keeping with the line to which He is then directing (not to speak of what may be manifestly unscriptural), as cannot commend itself to those who are spiritual. On the other hand, when we think that every child of God present is composed of that which is born of the flesh, as well as that which is born of the Spirit, and that Satan, when we are unguarded, can act on the former, it is wonderful that God's care and goodness are so manifestly over us on such occasions. We believe that few things have dishonoured the Lord, and brought the truth into disrepute, more than fleshly ways and utterances when gathered together in our Lord's name. We commend the subject for earnest prayer, and deep exercise of soul and self-judgment before the Lord to our beloved brethren in Christ. It may be that some who begun well have sunk down from the place of dependence and faith in the Lord to fleshly energy and unbelief; like the Galatian saints who begun in the Spirit, and sought to be

made perfect in the flesh. While others who have received gifts from the ascended Lord have, through unwatchfulness, become drowsy and inactive, and thus left room for those who have not gift and but little power, to grieve and weary their hearers, if not to offend and scatter the saints. We trust that God's children everywhere will lay this matter to heart; that, as every one of us has received grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, we may each so feel our responsibility to the Lord as to occupy the place in the body, and the measure which He has given for His glory, and godly edification. Surely the gifts have been given for building up the members of the body, and all that is done should be for profit to the hearers; and these points are never to be lost sight of. Even if a person could speak in the Spirit, he is not to do so, unless it would profit others; and the number who should speak at a meeting is limited to two or three (1 Cor. 14:29).

We doubt not that a great deal of fleshly activity in the assembly, and of unbelief as to the operations of the Holy Ghost, is because His Godhead and personality have not been more distinctly held. When He is clearly known as indwelling the believer, and also having His abode in the church -- the house -- then His gracious working and power are constantly looked for. Such know that we cannot have a true heartfelt thought of Christ, not a glance of the eye of the heart to Him in the glory, not a grateful remembrance of His sufferings, death, and triumphs, but by the Holy Ghost. We have not a feeling of love to Him, not a lifting of our souls in worship to the Father, not a happy sense of being in His presence in virtue of the blood of Him who is now seated on His throne, not a desire for His coming -- but by the Holy Ghost.

Moreover, it is not mere instruction, or reproof, that He ministers; it is not merely informing light, which the Holy Ghost gives, but

the light of life {John 8:12},

thus drawing out our affections in adoring gratitude and praise. His ministry, too, will be always

meat in due season {Matt. 24:45};

and

a word spoken in due season, how good is it! {Prov. 15:23}

So that we may expect when ministry is really in the energy of the Holy Ghost it will not only minister Christ to souls, and open up and enforce the divine authority of scripture, but it will commend itself to consciences as meeting the present need. We judge, therefore, that those who minister the word as guided by the Holy Ghost, will not merely give out what they know to be the truth, but what, after exercise before the Lord, they believe to be food for

the flock of God {1 Pet. 5:2}.

It is one of the marks which our Lord has given of a

faithful and wise servant {Matt. 24:45}.

The word abounds, too, with instruction as to the mind of the Spirit in the servants, such as

in honour preferring one another {Rom. 12:10},

let each esteem other better than themselves {Phil. 2:3},
submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God
{Eph. 5:21}.

Those, therefore, who have received gifts from the ascended Christ need a state of soul suited to His mind; then we are sure that lowliness, courteousness, and reverence will be manifested by them. We have sometimes thought that blessing has been hindered by a lack of these gracious ways. On the other hand, saints who hear need a moral fitness, a state of soul capable of receiving a divinely-given ministry; and when this is wanting, how can profit be expected? From all these considerations it is clear that though the Lord is in the midst of those gathered together to His name, and the Holy Ghost always in each believer, and in the house, we are set in the place of absolute dependence on the Lord, and as those who have died with Him and are alive in Him, are to honour the Holy Ghost, and have no confidence in the flesh. It is surely a matter of all importance.

And further, it is well to perceive that the Holy Ghost by the scripture teaches that He has definiteness of purpose as to the object in gathering us together. Without referring to gospel preaching, and meetings for teaching, which obviously are not assembly meetings, we may observe that in ch. 11 of the first epistle to the Corinthians, the saints are looked at as gathered together for the definite purpose of eating the Lord's Supper. Full directions are found in scripture as to the Lord's mind about it. The one great object is to remember Him.

This do in remembrance of me {1 Cor. 11:24}.

In eating of the bread together and drinking of the cup, we show forth the Lord's death; and it is clearly His mind that we should be so occupied from time to time till He come again.

As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come {1 Cor. 11:26}.

If remembering the Lord and showing His death, then, do not characterise such a meeting of the saints, how can it be according to the guidance of the Holy Ghost? Can He possibly act contrary to His own written directions?

Again. In the fifteenth chapter of Acts, the saints were gathered together before the Lord to judge a question of doctrine. They were manifestly led to it by the Holy Ghost thus to come together, with the apostles and elders, and consider the matter before the Lord; and we find this characterised the whole meeting. The simple object of that meeting was before them throughout. The subject was looked at in various ways, and different brethren expressed what they judged was *the Lord's mind*, but at the close they could, say,

It seemeth good to the Holy Ghost and to us {Acts 15:28}.

The same definiteness is observed in a meeting of an assembly for discipline (1 Cor. 5:4, 5).

If we look at meetings for prayer as recorded by the Holy Ghost in the Acts of the Apostles, we see what point and definiteness marked these meetings. In the fourth chapter the supplications were earnest, and presented to God with one accord. In the twelfth chapter they were gathered together praying. Prayer was the simple object of the meeting. We may be sure, therefore, there were not rambling and disconnected utterances about the truth, but that simple and definite prayer was presented to God. Few things are more unprofitable and painful to those who are

simple in prayer than a string of pointless words, however orthodox, or a kind of lecture prayer, an aim at instructing those who kneel beside them, or an attempt at giving information to God, not to speak of the great irreverence of praying at others; but such proceedings never fail to carry with them the stamp of unreality. In these meetings for prayer recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, those who prayed were simply a mouth-piece for those assembled, and so expressed themselves that the others could heartily go with them; for, without this, how could there be

one accord {Acts 1:14}?

The Holy Ghost tells us that they

lifted up their voice to God with one accord {Acts 4:24},

and prayed; and again, that

many were gathered together praying {Acts 12:12},

and that

prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God
{Acts 12:5}

for Peter; so that we may be sure, though there might be thanksgiving too, that prayer -- earnest, united, prayer and supplication in the Spirit -- characterised these meetings for prayer. We believe these points are of all-importance at this time, for in some places the meetings for prayer have been humiliating, rather than a solemn pouring out of heart to God in earnest request with reverence and godly fear. This may often account for the few that attend; for when souls are really gathered to wait on God in prayer, we can scarcely think of saints who would not make every effort to be present. The truth is, that if the Lord's presence and the power of the Holy Ghost are looked for, all will go on well; without this, nothing can.

When the Lord is given His rightful place in our midst, and the power of the Holy Ghost is therefore really known, we doubt not that souls will be filled with joy and peace in believing, and abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost. There will be, too, a sense of what for the present suits Him who is the Holy and the True. Being ourselves free and happy in His presence there will surely be prayer for all saints; for how can we be really holding the Head without embracing every member of His body? How can we be diligently keeping the Spirit's unity unless our interests, affections, and prayers go out towards all saints?

And further. If we are in the enjoyment of the various relationships into which God, in the exceeding riches of His grace, has brought us, shall we not be in earnest prayer that others may be saved, that the word of the Lord may run, have free course, and be glorified? If we are rejoicing in the hope of our Lord's coming, can we fail to preach and pray that multitudes may take of the water of life freely to His eternal praise and glory? If we really honour the Holy Ghost, how can we be indifferent to the glad-tidings which He declares? Yea, rather, how can we fail to take the deepest interest in the gospel of the grace of God, which is now preached by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven?

Things New and Old 25:297-305.

The Victory of Christ, And Its Effects on Those Who Believe

He loved him as his own soul. And *Jonathan stripped himself* of the robe that was upon him, and gave to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle (1 Sam. 18:3, 4).

David, as many know, was a remarkable type of Jesus, especially as the rejected One; and Solomon typified Jesus as the reigning One.

David was spoken of as *a man after God's own heart*; and, if an erring mortal man was thus described, how much more truly could it be said of Jesus! of whom, after thirty years of stranger-ship, temptation, and tears, in this death-stricken world, the voice from the excellent glory declared,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased
{2 Pet. 1:17}.

So exactly was He after God's own heart, that He could say,

He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father {John 14:9};

and the Holy Ghost, when speaking of Him, says, He was God manifest in the flesh {1 Tim. 3:16}.

David also had been *anointed* according to the will of God. Having been divinely chosen from among the people, Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren (1 Sam. 16:12, 13). He was *God's king*, and destined to sit in royal majesty upon the holy hill of Zion. And was not Jesus Jehovah's elect Servant? Was He not anointed with the Holy Ghost? Did not the Holy Ghost come down from heaven, in bodily shape, as a dove, and abide upon Him, because He was the true Messiah? And was it not the angel Gabriel, in connection with His coming into the world, who said,

the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:31-33)?

David was also a *shepherd* (1 Sam. 17:15). We are told that God

chose David also as his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds: from following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands (Psa. 78:70-72).

And cannot we perceive a greater than David here? Does it not strikingly remind us of Him who said,

I am the good Shepherd: the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. . . . My sheep hear my voice, &c.
(John 10:11-16, 27)?

Surely none but He who is the great and chief Shepherd of the sheep could say,

Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, one shepherd {John 10:16, New Trans., JND }.

And again,

Feed my lambs. . . . Feed my sheep (John 21:15-17).

What a Shepherd and Bishop of souls He is!

But though David was at this time the king of Jehovah's choice, and destined to rule His people, Israel, yet we find him *despised and rejected of men*. His quieting the troubled spirit of Saul by the melodious tone of the harp-strings which he touched, recalls to our minds the state of many in Christendom, who think of Jesus merely as an object of interest, and admire the sweet sound of gospel truth, instead of receiving the Lord Jesus as their Savior from coming wrath, and His blood as that which can alone purge their consciences, and make them fit for God's holy presence. To see the Savior's miracles, to behold His inimitable ways, and listen to His marvelous utterances, were to many who thronged Him only like a pleasant song to interest and quiet the natural mind.

If Jesus came unto His own, and His own received Him not; if, too, it is recorded that

neither did his brethren believe on him {John 7:5, New Trans., JND};

and if others ascribed His mighty power to Satanic influence, we read that David was so despised by his brethren, that they ascribed his devotedness to the God of Israel to pride and naughtiness of heart (1 Sam. 17:28).

But David was *an obedient son*, who did his father's will, and that, too, in ministering to his brethren, and seeking their welfare.

Jesse said to David his son, Take now for *thy brethren* an ephah of this parched corn, and these ten loaves, and run to the camp to *thy brethren*; and carry these ten cheeses unto the captain of their thousand, and look how *thy brethren* fare, and take their pledge (1 Sam. 17:17, 18).

And does not this recall Him to our minds whose

meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work {see John 4:34}?

Truly He could say,

I do always those things that please him {John 8:29};

and at the close He bowed His head in death, with,

It is finished {John 19:30};

I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do {John 17:4}

And if David's heart was set on the welfare of his brethren, how incomparably more was it true of Jesus, who

came forth from the Father {John 16:28},

and

came unto his own {John 1:11};

who

came to seek and to save that which was lost {see Luke 19:10}!

And yet further, for if David in his mission to his brethren found them

dismayed, and greatly afraid {1 Sam. 17:11},

because of the mighty power of their great adversary, did not Jesus find His own people not only under the Roman yoke, but under the blinding and terrible power of Satan, who had the power of death? In no period of Bible history, do we find more recorded of the activity of demons, than when our Lord came to His people Israel. And if David longed for their deliverance, how much more did He who was afflicted in all their afflictions, and died for that nation, yearn over them!

The life of faith, too, was strikingly beheld in the ways of David. Though despised by his brethren, whose blessing he was seeking, tempted, too, to rely on the competency of human weapons, which he so sternly refused, and in privacy and retirement his trusting in Jehovah his God, again give us precious shadows of Him who was the Leader and Completer of faith; who, from Bethlehem to Calvary, trod every step in unfeigned dependence, unwavering faith, and perfect obedience to the Father. Though

being in the form of God . . . and found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, &c. {Phil. 2:6-11}.

It is most blessed to trace the Son of man, always perfect in the ways of faith, and thus overcoming the tempter, and the malice of those who threatened to destroy Him; even as David, in his tiny measure, could speak of the divine power by which, in the quietude of caring for the sheep, he had been able to slay both the lion and the bear (1 Sam. 17:34, 35).

It was when visiting his brethren, and caring for them, according to his father's will, that he witnessed the threatening attitude of their mighty adversary, and beheld their helplessness and fear; but they knew not that the hour for the accomplishment of their deliverance was at hand. To all appearance, they were about to be completely swallowed up, and there was none to help. The armies of Israel had been defied, and the name of the Lord of hosts had been blasphemed. It would be, therefore, for the glory of Jehovah, as well as for the salvation of His helpless people, that deliverance should be wrought, and that they should be rescued from oppression and death. David was their savior. He could trust God; he could face death, go, as it were, into its very jaws, and triumph over this invincible Goliath; thus did he dimly foreshadow Him, who, in an after age, could say, in the immediate prospect of the death of the cross,

Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [hades]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Psa. 16:10, 11).

The stripling, David, went forth, facing death and him (typically speaking) who had the power of death, in the fullest confidence in Jehovah of victory (1 Sam. 17:46, 47). There stood David, having not even a sword in his hand, with the five smooth stones out of

the brook in a shepherd's bag; and there he faced the giant Goliath, with his drawn sword, armed with his coat of mail, and covered, with greaves of brass, and a target of brass, with a man bearing a shield before him. It was a moment of breathless silence for spectators. The ruddy and anointed David was, to man's eye, rushing into death itself; but his faith is in Jehovah, who can do everything. Jehovah can deliver me, said the anointed and beloved of God. The time was at hand: the awful moment arrives, and the giant is felled to the earth by one of David's little stones; yes, the stone, guided by divine power, sinks into his forehead, and he lies dead upon his face to the earth.

Therefore David ran, and stood upon the Philistine, [putting the giant under his feet] and took his sword, and drew it out of the sheath thereof, and slew him, and cut off his head therewith {1 Sam. 17:51}.

And what can more strikingly illustrate the victory which Jesus has obtained for us through death itself, over death and him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. 2:14, 15)? How truly the believer can now say,

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 15:55-57}.

Yes, Jesus overcame Satan by his own weapons, for it was *through death* that He abolished death, and overcame him that had the power of death. It was by His own power He trampled upon the mighty foe, as Man, in resurrection, and was righteously glorified at God's right hand, as having glorified God on the earth, and that even as to our sins, and wrought this marvelous victory over death and Satan. Happy are they who can therefore say,

"We triumph in Thy triumphs, Lord,"

who, pondering the cost to Him of our deliverance, not only from the guilt of sins, by His precious blood, but also from death and Satan, in Him who rose from among the dead, find never-failing springs of joy and rejoicing in our almighty Conqueror. So truly has the Lord Jesus

abolished death {2 Tim. 1:10}

for those who believe in His name, that it is not necessary that we should die; on the contrary, we are told that

we shall not all sleep {1 Cor. 15:51},

that when Jesus comes some will be

alive and remain {1 Thess. 4:17},

and will then be changed, and caught up (without dying) to meet the Lord in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord. Thus Jesus gives us victory, all the blessedness of the victory which He hath obtained for us -- not merely victory through the blood of the Lamb, but victory in Him who in resurrection has triumphed over death and Satan for us. What a victory!

"O death and hell, I cannot dread your power,
The debt is paid.
On Jesus, in that dark and dreadful hour,
My sins were laid.

Yes, Jesus bore them! bore, in love unbounded,
What none can know.

He died, but rose again, and so confounded
The awful foe.

He's now up there! Proclaim the joyful story --
The Lord's on high!
And I in Him am raised to endless glory,
And ne'er can die."

Now let us look at the effects on souls who know something of the value of this victory which hath been obtained for us. No doubt this typical instruction really applies to Israel, and not to the church; but we use it now as illustrating its effects on us who believe the gospel of the grace of God.

First, let us notice that the good news of the *work* which the Lord's anointed had accomplished for them filled those who believed it with thankfulness and courage. Their former fears and dismay had now entirely fled. When they saw what a victory had been obtained for them, they

arose, and shouted {1 Sam. 17:52};

they were strengthened also to fight the battle of the Lord -- they pursued the Philistines {1 Sam. 17:52},

and found themselves more than conquerors through Him that loved them; for

they spoiled their tents {1 Sam. 17:53}.

And so now, when the soul first believes what Christ has accomplished for him by His death and rising again from among the dead, he is ready to shout for joy, as many do; he can scarcely express the happiness he feels at this marvelous salvation. He takes sides with the Savior, and not with the world; and he also finds, not only that he is delivered from coming wrath *by* Christ, but that he is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places *in* Christ. He counts over his spoil -- his many blessings. But this is the effect of knowing something of the value of the Savior's *work*. This is very blessed; but we have not only salvation, but a Savior; not only redemption, but a Redeemer.

Hence others are taken up not only with the *work*, but with the *person* who did it. The eyes of some were fixed on David. They saw him with the head of Goliath in his hand, and they heard his own words concerning it. Like the disciples, they not only saw the risen Savior, and heard His own testimony to the value of that work, saying,

Peace be unto you {John 20:19, 20},

when He showed them His hands and His side, but their eyes were fixed on *Himself*. It was not only the work done for them, giving them perfect and everlasting victory -- most blessed as it was -- but they went further, they were occupied with the *Person* who had done it. It was this which had such power on their hearts, for

Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord
{John 20:20}.

Now Jonathan was one of those who had gazed on David, the mighty conqueror, with the head of Goliath in his hand, and he had listened to his own words concerning it. Now mark the effect of being occupied with the *person* who did the work. We are told that Jonathan

loved him as his own soul {1 Sam. 18:1};

yes, he

delighted much in David {1 Sam. 19:2};

and we read again,

because he loved him as his own soul {1 Sam. 18:3}.

It was a joyous moment. But that is not all. His heart being taken up with David, he felt that nothing less became him than to strip himself of his robe, and garment, and sword, as well as his bow and girdle, and give to David. Observe, this is not giving up bad things, but giving the best things to David; not being stripped of God, but stripping ourselves for our true David, that we have here.

And now, dear christian reader, we would affectionately ask, whether the Person of Christ, or His work, most engages your attention? Do His personal excellences and worth so fill our souls, that we have been constrained to live unto Him? We believe that no part of divine truth needs more pressing on the consciences of believers at this time, than personal intercourse and occupation with Christ Himself; for then we shall surely be constrained to yield ourselves and all we have to Him. There is such a disposition in the present day to hold the highest doctrines of divine grace with a low and worldly walk, that stripping ourselves for the honour and glory of our precious Savior has, we fear, but little place, even to what it had some years ago. Was it not the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord which enabled the apostle Paul to strip himself of all he had ever prized and gloried in? It is this surely that our Lord demands. Did He not knock at the Laodicean church, and show Himself ready to sup with any who would open the door to Him? Happy are they who are thus taken up with Christ Himself. Such become knit to Him, drawn out in love to Him, strip themselves for Him, and, looking up, say, Come, Lord Jesus!

Things New and Old 25:169-179.

Coming Judgment and Divine Goodness

Nahum 1:6-8

When we contemplate the prophetic scriptures, we have to consider the people, and their state, of whom the prophet speaks, and also how far the principles of divine truth there set forth can be used for the profit of souls in the present day.

Nahum's ministry, though peculiarly solemn, was simple. He pointed to the divine judgments impending on the great and arrogant city of Nineveh. It had long been exalting itself, and it must be laid low.

Nineveh was a most ancient city, the capital of Assyria. From Gen. 10:11 (margin) we gather that Assyria was founded by Nimrod, and the city was built by Asshur. Historians tell us that it was about sixty miles in circumference, surrounded by a wall one hundred feet high, wide enough for three chariots to drive abreast, and having fifteen hundred towers, two hundred feet high. It contained

much *cattle* {Jonah 4:11},

so that it evidently enclosed a great space of fertile and cultivated land, besides dwelling-houses. In Jonah we read that it contained, in his day,

six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand {Jonah 4:11};

and, if this refers to children, the probability is that the population of Nineveh might not have been less than half a million.

It is true that Assyria had been allowed by Jehovah to come against His people in His governmental dealings with them. But the Assyrians were lifted up; they ascribed their success in oppressing God's people to their own power and prudence, and their desire was to destroy them. We read,

O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. Howbeit he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few. . . . Therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, O my people that dwelleth in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt. For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction (Isa. 10:5-25).

Again, we read,

For through the voice of the Lord shall the Assyrian be beaten down, which smote with the rod (Isa. 30:31).

The Assyrian oppressed them without cause. (Isa. 52:4).

Thus the rod which Jehovah used strove against Him who used it, and came under divine judgment.

After announcing the truth that God is jealous, and revengeth, the prophet Nahum declares that Jehovah is

slow to anger {Nah. 1:3}.

This had been remarkably exemplified in God's previous dealings with men, and now also with Nineveh, as we know it was afterwards with the Jews, and still is with professing Christendom and the world. But, though

slow to anger,

judgment must come, for

he will not at all acquit the wicked {Nah. 1:3}.

It is because God is long-suffering, and that, after eighteen hundred years of warning, the Lord has not yet come to carry it out, that the scoffer says,

Where is the promise of his coming? {2 Pet. 3:4}

and the infidel folds his arms with self-complacency, and despises the truth, because there is no outward appearance of coming judgment. Thus the scripture is being fulfilled,

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set upon them to do evil (Eccl. 8:11).

It was so with Nineveh.

Upwards of a century before Nahum's prophecy, Jonah was sent to this great city. The word of Jehovah came to him, saying,

Go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me {Jonah 1:2}.

We know that he did not go at first, for he needed to pass through death and resurrection in his own soul before he was competent for the mission.

And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord . . . and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown {Jonah 3:1-4}.

The effect was that the Ninevites heard, believed, repented, fasted, and put on sackcloth, so that God spared the city, and did not bring the judgment He had said He would upon it.

It was long after this that the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel (the ten tribes) away into Assyria. For the Lord rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hands of spoilers, until he had cast them out of His sight. So were Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day. They are generally called the "lost tribes," because no one knows where they are (2 Kings 17:6-23).

Only a few years after this, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, came up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them, and afterwards came against Jerusalem with a great host, and, with great haughtiness, sought to overcome the city. But God answered the cries of His faithful servants, and sent an angel to destroy a hundred and fourscore and five thousand of the king of Assyria's army in one night, and the king himself was murdered by his own sons.

It was about this time that Nahum predicted the fall of self-exalted Nineveh, which would be so effectually done, that it would not rise up the second time {Nah. 1:9},

and the city be so entombed in its own ruins, that the scripture should be literally fulfilled,

I will make thy grave, for thou art vile {Nah. 1:14},
and of it should be said,

Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; . . . and . . . all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste; who will bemoan her? {Nah. 3:5-7}.

Woe to the bloody city, it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not {Nah. 3:1}.

The prophet tells us concerning the siege and ruin of the city (Nah. 3:14), that

the gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved {Nah. 2:6};

and

the fire devour thee {Nah. 3:15};

and historians tell us that the river Tigris overflowed its banks, and poured into the doomed city, and that the haughty king, after sustaining a siege of two years, set his own palace on fire, and in this way perished. Thus Nineveh was utterly destroyed, never more to raise its head, while

Assyria

and

the king of the north

will occupy an important part by-and-by, and Assyria will have special blessing in millennial days (Dan. 11; Isa. 19:25).

Such is a brief glance at Nahum's prophecy, which we know had a literal fulfilment; so that even now Nineveh's ruins are a desolation. Antiquarians are exploring it, and exhuming from this huge

grave {Nah. 1:14}

vast varieties of testimony to the accomplishment of the word of the prophets; its site is a place for flocks to

lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations; both the cormorant, and the bittern, &c. (Zeph. 2:13-15).

But does not this illustrate another coming judgment of a far more serious character? Has not the clear and loud prophetic warning concerning this long ago gone forth? Let us turn to the apostolic writings. In 2 Thess. 1 we read,

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

What can be plainer, and yet how very solemn! Again, we are told, that

the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape (1 Thess. 5:2, 3).

Peter also speaks of the day of the Lord coming as a thief in the night (2 Pet. 3:10), and John assures us that when the Lord does thus come out of heaven to judge the living,

every eye shall see him . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him (Rev. 1:7).

Because God is

slow to anger {Psa. 103:8, 145:8},

He has been giving this warning for upwards of eighteen hundred years; yet, as certainly as Nineveh did fall, and wicked Jerusalem, after much long-suffering, was destroyed by murderers, and burned with fire, so surely must the threatened judgments, which are still hanging over this doomed world, have their awful accomplishment, for God

will not at all acquit the wicked {Nah. 1:3}.

Truly men will know then that

The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. . . . The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him (Nah. 1:3-6).

What saith the reader to these awful predictions of prophets and apostles? Has it ever occurred to you, that every step the unconverted take is one step nearer to this appalling reality? Are you, dear reader, at peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ? and therefore able to contemplate this dreadful scene of men being punished with everlasting destruction, in the surest confidence that, ere this, Jesus will have come, and received you and other loved ones unto Himself, and taken you to the Father's house. If, dear reader, you are not converted, may you now turn to God, and receive remission of sins, through the cleansing value of the precious blood. of Jesus.

But amidst these sounds of divine judgment from Him who

will take vengeance on his adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for his enemies {Nah. 1:2},

a still, small voice is heard to comfort any who have ears to hear. To such the voice is profoundly precious and consoling.

The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him (Nah. 1:7).

1. "THE LORD IS GOOD." Though the righteous God loveth righteousness, and will not at all acquit the wicked, yet Jehovah is good; God is love. The cross of Christ blessedly manifested this. The love of God to sinners was there told out; for

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life {John 3:16}.

Yes, it was for sinners Jesus died -- He came into the world to save sinners. This is divine goodness to us when we were in our sins, enemies, and far from God.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us {Rom. 5:8}.

Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins {1 John 4:10}.

Wondrous love! And this is not all, for the free, unmerited love of God has brought us who believe into the same life, position, nearness, acceptance, and relationship as Christ Himself, at His own right hand, and given us the hope of being yet conformed to His image, and of reigning with Him in glory.

The glory which thou gavest me I have given them {John 17:22}.

Dear reader, dost thou believe God? Do these testimonies of holy scripture concerning the goodness of God so touch thine heart, as to cause thee to cry out with others,

We love him, because he *first* loved us {1 John 4:19}?

Does the highest thought of goodness thou hast ever conceived in the least degree compare with this goodness of God? Has it broken thine heart? for truly the goodness of God leadeth to repentance. Surely those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious long for ten thousand tongues to praise Him, and if they had a hundred lives, would like to give them all to Him and His precious service.

2. But He is also "A STRONGHOLD IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE." Yes, if the faithful then living had seen Nineveh falling into a heap of ruins, or the king's palace consumed by the flaming fire; if, at another time, believers had seen the justly-doomed city of Jerusalem under its predicted judgment, they would in either case find the presence of Jehovah their hiding-place and stronghold. And by-and-by, when men are crying out to the rocks to fall on them, and the hills to cover them, and hide them from the presence of Him who is coming to execute the vengeance due to this Christ-rejecting world, the church of God will be safe in glory, and truly rejoicing in the goodness of God, and the stronghold they know Him to be. Even now to faith,

the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe {Prov. 18:10}.

And so, on every occasion of sorrow, where is the child of God who does not know that the Lord is good and a strong hold in the day of trouble! What a strong hold we find when we are abiding in the consciousness that we are in Christ, and loved by the Father as He loves Jesus!

3. He knows who believe -- HE KNOWETH THEM THAT TRUST IN HIM." Yes, He knows, and that is all we wish.

The Lord knoweth them that are his {2 Tim. 2:19}.

My faith may be the feeblest, but He knows that I look to Jesus, the object of faith, that I

come unto God by him {Heb. 7:25}.

How consoling is this sweet truth! There is not a thought in our hearts, not a word on our tongue, but He knows it altogether. As Peter, when it was a question of love, could say,

Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee {John 21:17};

so the believer can say, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I look to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to Him alone, as my Savior, my way to Thee, my life, righteousness, and all. Oh yes,

He knoweth them that trust in him {Nah. 1:7}.

These very words might have been an unspeakable comfort to the Annas and Simeons of a former time, and another remnant may by-and-by lift up their heads in times of infidelity and apostasy, and say,

The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him {Nah. 1:7}.

Things New and Old 25:225-234.

Gethsemane and Calvary

The darkness of night had set in, and the hour was at hand. The Supper (never to be forgotten) was ended, and a psalm had been sung. It was a profoundly awful moment, and all nature seemed breathless and silent. The betrayer in whom Satan had entered was near. The trampling of the feet of the multitude armed with swords and staves, headed by the traitor, to take the Lord, might almost be heard in the distance, while the light of their lanterns and torches might well nigh be discerned; for that which had long been written concerning sacrifice and offering must soon be fulfilled.

The passover which Jesus had so lovingly desired to eat with His disciples had been kept, so that

the suffering of death {Heb. 2:9}

for which He had come into the world had been most pointedly before His tender heart. His deeply-felt utterance had been,

With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you *before I suffer* {Luke 22:15}.

It must have been a most affecting time, for He knew that He Himself was the paschal Lamb, the Redeemer of His people Israel. And yet, after fulfilling the scripture in eating the passover, His death,

even the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8},

was still more strikingly set forth in the institution of His own supper. How touching is the divine record

The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me {see 1 Cor. 11:23, 24, see also New Trans., JND}.

Yes, those very hands which were so soon to be cruelly nailed to the tree by wicked men, took the loaf and brake it, to set forth the symbol of His own body which in a few hours would be actually offered to God as a sacrifice for sin.

After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped [after supper], saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me {1 Cor. 11:25}.

For this, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was about to offer Himself, and His blood would be shed for many for the remission of sins. How vividly and affectingly must this have brought before the Holy Sufferer the unutterable sorrow and pain so immediately before

Him, when He would once suffer for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God! But what lessons of infinite love all this reads to our hearts!

Soon after this, Jesus and His disciples crossed the brook Cedron, and entered into the quiet garden of Gethsemane. This place was well known to Judas, for Jesus had oftentimes resorted thither with His disciples. There, after saying to them,

Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder {Matt. 26:36},

He took Peter, and James, and John aside, and in sore amazement and trouble, saith unto them,

My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me {Matt. 26:38}.

Then withdrawing from them, about a stone's cast,

He fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt {Matt. 26:39}.

Again, He said,

O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done {Matt. 26:42}.

Again, He prayed

the third time, saying the same words {Matt. 26:44}.

What human language could possibly portray, the exceeding solemnity of this scene! When we think that this blessed One could have prayed to His Father, and He would have presently given Him twelve legions of angels, how it bows our hearts in worship, when, instead of asking deliverance for Himself, we hear Him saying,

Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name {John 12:27, 28}.

And yet, with this most blessed and complete surrender of Himself to the Father's will, what unutterable sorrow and agony pressed upon His heart! As man, which is the view Luke specially takes of our Lord, so terrible was the distress, that we are told

there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground {Luke 22:43, 44}.

Can we conceive trouble and anguish more terrible, for the heart to be so sorrowful as to be connected with such effects? And yet, though the cup was before the Holy Sufferer, it was not to be drunk there. We find from the eighteenth chapter of John's gospel that it was after the terrible conflict in the garden was over, after His betrayers and murderers had come upon Him, after Peter had cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, that He had not then drunk the cup, for He said,

The cup which my Father hath given me, *shall I not* drink it? {John 18:11}.

If Luke's line is to look at Jesus as man, John certainly speaks of Him especially as a divine Person, and therefore does not bring before us the Savior's prayer and conflict in the garden.

But let us contemplate a little further this astounding scene in Gethsemane, in that dark and memorable night. Why is the Holy One prostrate on the ground? Why such agony? Why that sweat as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground? Why

those earnest prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears? Why the thrice repeated cry to the Father? Why such bitter grief? for neither the hand of God nor of man was upon Him. Was not Satan there? Was not THE CUP there presented to Him? What a cup! Who can describe its unmixed bitterness! And why did Jesus so dread the drinking of that cup? How could it be otherwise? Did not the Savior say to the cruel multitude,

This is your hour, and, the power of darkness {Luke 22:53}?

Yes, it was their hour; for those who had hated Jesus without a cause, and had sought to destroy Him, should no longer be restrained, but, according to the divine counsel, He would be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and the prince of this world, who had the power of death, would put forth his power against Him. In this way, Jesus, by wicked hands, would be crucified and slain. Again, it may be asked, Was not Satan there? Did not this wicked one seek to devour the man-child, soon after His birth in Bethlehem, through Herod's sword? Afterwards, did he not endeavour by repeated temptation to overcome, if possible, the blessed Lord on His entrance on His public ministry? And did not our Savior say almost immediately before He entered Gethsemane,

The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me {John 14:30}?

No doubt he came, and pressed the weight and terror of death upon Him, but found in Him calm submission and perfect obedience to the Father's will. As another has said, "For Him obedience, however terrible the sufferings, was the joy and breathing of His soul." How the contemplation of Him bows our hearts in adoration! Did not the cup clearly set forth that the righteous Sufferer must be given into the hands of His betrayers; that He must bear our sins in His own body on the tree, and be made sin for us; that death, as Satan's power, and God's just judgment of sin, must be suffered by Him, and, more than all, as suffering for our sins, He must be forsaken of God? Thus to be betrayed by one apostle, thrice denied by another, forsaken of all; to be the Sin-bearer, and made sin for us, to be forsaken of God, and given up to the death of the cross, were immediately before Him. Could it be otherwise then that He who was perfect in love, in holiness, and in every sensibility of purity and truth, should have earnestly cried,

O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt {Matt. 26:39}?

According to the divine counsels and ways of grace to us, and the glory of God, it was not possible; we therefore, after the thrice repeated prayer, see Him rising up in perfect submission to the Father's will, and looking away from secondary causes He goes forth in obedience to take the cup out of His Father's hand, and at Calvary finish the work which the Father gave Him to do. He said,

Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me. And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people {Matt. 26:46, 47}.

Soon the traitor's kiss with Satanic foulness was imprinted on the Savior's cheek (how hateful and distressing to Jesus!), for the betrayer's sign was,

Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast
{Matt. 26:28}!

How thoroughly Satanic is this work!

Thus we see the sufferings of the loving Savior in Gethsemane were great beyond the largest powers of our comprehension; but the sufferings there were not atoning. Jesus was not there bearing sins, consequently there was not suffering divine judgment for sin; He was not then forsaken of God, there was no death in the garden, the cup was not drunk then; how could there be therefore atonement? No doubt Gethsemane's sufferings, though unutterably great, were from the anticipation of what He must so soon pass through. In the garden, instead of being forsaken of God, He was in uninterrupted communion with the Father; instead of having to say, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me," He had disciples with Him, and He said unto them,

Watch with me {Matt. 26:38}.

True, instead of watching, they slept; but they were companions with Him in the suffering. When on the cross making atonement for sins, He was alone, He did

by himself {Heb. 1:3}

purge our sins; but in the garden, in testimony of His perfect purity before God, an angel was sent to strengthen Him. The contrast, then, between the Savior's sufferings in the garden and on the cross is very striking.

Among other precious lessons which we may learn from the contemplation of our Savior in Gethsemane, we may observe --

1st. If the *anticipation* of the sufferings of Jesus in the garden produced such unutterable distress, what must have been the magnitude and the reality of His suffering on the cross, when He was bruised and put to grief, and His soul was made an offering for sin?

2nd, When we consider for a moment what drinking the cup involved, it becomes evident that only a person with divine capacities could have drunk it, and have risen triumphantly out of it all to the eternal praise and glory of God.

3rd. In the garden, as well as elsewhere, He has

left us an example that we should follow his steps {see 1 Pet. 2:21}.

And although He only could drink that cup, yet we may learn that earnest cryings and prayers, and supplications, and repeated, too, in time of trouble, are perfectly consistent with entire submission to our Father's will, and desire for His glory.

Being in an agony he prayed more earnestly {Luke 22:44}.

Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered {Heb. 5:8}.

4th. That in time of distress and sorrow, whether, instrumentally, it come to us from Satan or man, or both, it becomes us to be so satisfied that it is His will, as to take the distress, whatever it may be, from His hands. Though Satan's and man's hatred, sin, the grave, death under judgment of sin, and forsaking, were involved in our Savior's drinking the cup, yet He so discerned His Father's will, as to rise above all secondary causes, and say,

The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?
{John 18:11}.

To see God in everything is surely the activity of a divinely-wrought faith; but can this be till the soul has taken the ground before Him of

nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt
{Mark 14:36}?

5th. It is scarcely possible for us to meditate on the cup of unmingled sorrow which He drank for us, without a lively sense in our souls of divine grace, and the amazing contrast of it with the cup of perfect love and peace which He bids us drink in remembrance of Him.

6th. The more our spirits are in company with our adorable Lord in Gethsemane, the more the work of the cross will stand pre-eminently before our souls in its perfectness; the more, too, will the magnitude and value of the finished work take hold on us, and we shall enter increasingly into the solid and immoveable basis in divine righteousness on which all our hopes and blessings are eternally founded.

Things New and Old 25:281-289.

“I’d Rather Suffer Loss”

“It was in that very spot, sir,” said a working shoemaker, pointing to a place in his little workshop, “Yes, in that very place, sir, six years ago, that the Lord spoke peace to my troubled soul; and how good and gracious He is.” Such was almost the beginning of our happy and profitable intercourse on paying a visit to this dear servant of the Lord Jesus. . . .

After talking generally together, and having had sweet fellowship in the things of our precious Savior and Lord, and we were about to leave, he said, “I should like to let you know something about the exercises of soul I have been lately passing through.” To this we readily assented.

He then said something like this: “When I was converted to God, and knew the Lord Jesus Christ His Son as my Savior, I thought I shall now surely prosper in my little business; but in this I was sadly mistaken, for my earnings very soon fell off. The first year I earned three shillings a week less, the second year three shillings a week less, the third year four shillings a week less, and of late my earnings have been so little that I thought I must give it up, and seek some other employment, though I have so enjoyed the Lord’s presence with me in this little place. Accordingly, knowing Mr. M. to be a kind christian man, and that he held a good situation in a large factory near this, I asked him if he thought he could procure me employment of any kind in his place of business, and he promised to let me know when there was a vacancy.

“But after this I became deeply exercised before the Lord as to what I was about. Is this that I am seeking according to my own will or the Lord’s will? Is He bidding me to give up my present calling and seek another? for I have had much of the Lord’s presence, and enjoyed His sweet company when working alone in this corner. And just then the Lord seemed to say to me, Which will you have? Will you go into the factory, and mix with the ungodly multitude with large wages, or remain in this corner and enjoy my presence with small earnings; which will you have? I assure you, sir, it was a serious moment. I turned it well over in my mind. I considered how weak I am, how easily turned aside, and began to think that if I went into that factory to work, I might soon be drawn away, and lose my blessed Lord’s sweet company. So I said, ‘Lord, let me have Thy company even if it must be with small earnings; I’d rather suffer loss, than not enjoy Thy presence with me.’ From that time I became perfectly settled, and told Mr. M. not to think anything more about procuring a situation for me. Now, sir, it is remarkable that from that time work began to come in more than for a long time before.”

We could not help thinking that the result was just what we should have expected. We believe that one of the greatest hindrances to souls is their being so taken up with desire for worldly prosperity. The consequence is that the Lord has not got His rightful place in their hearts; and, however many excuses they may make, the question really is, “Am I seeking earthly gain, or the enjoyment of the Lord’s presence? Is communion with Him the uppermost desire of my heart?” Perhaps no point is of more importance for us really to settle in the presence of God. If

worldly advantage, to say nothing of the accumulation of wealth, has the *first* consideration, let it not surprise us, if such go further and further away from the Lord; but if we are willing to suffer loss, and to lay aside everything that hinders our enjoyment of His sweet company, then we may be sure that He will not forsake us as to food and raiment. We believe the scripture is as true as ever,

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

We do well to remember that to the believer it is said,

Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake (Phil. 1:29).

Things New and Old 25:330-332.

Growth in Grace

One mark of a *true believer*, is, that he has the consciousness that he needs Christ -- that whatever else he can do without, he cannot do without Him. He so knows that all his springs are in Christ, and that nothing can make up for a lack of occupation with Him, that he says --

“Wither’d and barren should I be,
If sever’d from the Vine.”

A true mark of a *thriving soul*, is, that he searches the scriptures for Christ, because he knows, on the authority of the Lord Himself, that they testify of Him. He remembers, too, that after Christ rose from among the dead, how He instructed and comforted His disciples, by ministering to them out of the ancient scriptures the things concerning Himself. And though he thanks God for giving unto him eternal life, and making him His child, he is well aware that there is progress in spiritual life, and that we are enjoined to

grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18).

In Peter’s first epistle we are also admonished as to growth:

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Pet. 2:2, 3).

It is clear, then, that the written word is that by which we grow, through its being received into our hearts by faith. And it is also equally true that those who neglect to read and ponder the scriptures, cannot expect to grow in grace.

We read that our God is

the God of all grace {1 Pet. 5:10}.

Precious truth! God, then, is the source of all grace, and it has come to us by Jesus Christ His Son, who was

full of grace and truth {John 1:14}.

Thus, though

the God of all grace

is the *source*, the *channel* through which it has come to us is Christ, and the *ministry* of it to our souls is through the written word, in the *power* of the Holy Ghost. In this way we are

established with grace {Heb. 13:9},

know we stand in grace before God, and that we are under grace; so that, dwelling in the favour of God, we can rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Thus drinking into our souls the precious word of the God of all grace produces grace in us, and the love of God being shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us, we have both spiritual strength and enjoyment, so as to walk in grace toward others. Hence, when faithful service is spoken of, we are first exhorted to

be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus {2 Tim. 2:1}.

By the grace of God we understand not only the full favour in which He has made us to stand, but as having loved us while we were yet sinners, and having brought us into the same nearness and relationship to Himself as Christ, making us His co-heirs, thus

giving us the hope of sharing His glory with Him; and not only so, but, by His present offices in heaven, providing for us as to every possible need in our pathway to the glory. The more the word of God is brought home to our hearts, and received in faith, by the teaching and power of the Holy Ghost, the more we increase in the knowledge of God, and the more the grace of God melts and moulds our hearts. In this we know there is progress, and we become more able to show forth practically the characteristics of Him

who hath called us out of darkness into his marvelous light
{see 1 Pet. 2:9}.

Growing in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will also accompany growth in grace; only there seems to be a tendency among us to be taken up with one or two views of Christ, to the neglect of others. Some Christians are like a person with a box of precious stones before him, and all of them different, who selects one or two, and never looks at the beauties of the others. Judging from the prayers and conversation of many beloved saints, there is little reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, beyond what He did for us as a sacrifice on the cross. Others may add something about His Priesthood or Advocacy, and some may speak of Him also as Head of the body; but few of God’s dear children seem aware of the immense variety of ways the Savior is presented to us: what He is in His own Person, His moral perfectness, and offices; what He is to God, and what God has made Him unto us. To confine our thoughts to what Jesus did for us on the cross, must always be connected with serious loss. So far as it goes, it is certainly most precious, because *all* our blessings are founded on the work of the cross; but on taking up some of the books of scripture, we find a great deal more than that, and our souls become astonished at the vast variety of ways in which His word is given for our profit, and through which Christ is ministered to our souls.

Take, for example, the Epistle to the Hebrews. Perhaps you cannot find saints in a lower state anywhere than the Hebrews were, for they were thinking of going back to Judaism, and thus abandoning christian ground. To such we find the inspired writer ministering Christ in a great variety of aspects. In running rapidly through this precious letter, we may observe, in the first chapter, the Son of God looked at as to His Deity; and in the second chapter, His perfect Manhood. In the third chapter we see Him as the Apostle sent down from heaven, and the High Priest gone up into heaven; also One greater than Moses, and Son over His own house. In the fourth chapter He is greater than David and Joshua. In the fifth chapter, He is seen to be greater than Aaron, and the Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. In the sixth chapter He is spoken of as the Forerunner for us entered. In the seventh chapter, He is shown to be greater than Abraham, having, as the Son consecrated for evermore, an unchangeable and unsuccessional priesthood. Between the second and ninth chapters, He is presented to us as a merciful and faithful High Priest, Jesus, the Son of God, passed through the heavens, able to succour us in temptation, sympathise with us in our infirmities, and ever living

to make intercession as to our need; and though carrying out Aaronic functions, is after the order of Melchisedec. In chapters nine and ten, the eternal value of His one sacrifice, giving remission of sins, a purged conscience, with liberty, through His blood, to enter into the holiest, where our High Priest is; and other weighty truths, are blessedly set forth, introducing the believer now, by faith, inside the veil, as a purged worshiper. In the eleventh chapter, we read of

the reproach of Christ {Heb. 11:26},

as connected with the walk of faith. In the twelfth chapter, we are called, while running the race of faith, to look off unto Jesus, now seated on the throne of God, as the One who began and completed the path of faith. Thus, in this epistle we are directed to Jesus as now seated on the right hand of the throne of God, as the One who purged our sins, as the sitting Priest, and as the Forerunner, who, while here, trod the path of faith perfectly. In the thirteenth chapter, after looking at Him, the virtue of whose blood has been brought within the veil, and His having suffered without the gate, in its practical bearing on us, the epistle concludes with another contemplation of the abundant glories of the Son, as the great Shepherd of the sheep, whom the God of peace brought again from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

Now, we affectionately ask the christian reader, Is it possible thus briefly to look through this epistle, without being struck with the variety of aspects in which the Person, accomplished work, moral glories, and offices of Christ are set forth, with a view to raising souls from their low estate, and establishing their hearts in the goodness and grace of God?

We shall find much the same in most of the other epistles. Let us take a brief glance at the touching letter of the apostle to the saints at Philippi. They are addressed as saints

in Christ Jesus {Phil. 1:1}.

In the first chapter the inspired writer is so occupied with the glory and worth of Christ, that he estimates everything he speaks of according to Him. Hence, as to service, he looks forward to the day of Christ, he rejoices wherever Christ is preached, looks at the chains he wears as his bonds in Christ, and says,

For to me to live is Christ {Phil. 1:21}.

When he thinks of fruit-bearing, it is

the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ {Phil. 1:11}.

His whole desire was, whether in life or in death, that Christ should be magnified in his body. If he thought of departing, it would be

to be with Christ {Phil. 1:23};

and he never seemed to forget that this was the place where we have, on Christ's behalf,

to suffer for his sake {Phil. 1:29}.

In the second chapter we have Christ as our Exemplar, in His perfect path of unselfish lowliness and obedience, tracked out for our imitation. The apostle also speaks of himself as ready to be offered as a sacrifice for Christ; of Timothy, as one who was devoted, not to his own things, but to Christ; and of Epaphroditus, as sick, nigh unto death, for the work of Christ.

In the third chapter, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ seen in heaven is brought out, as the mighty power which delivered Saul from all confidence in the Jews' religion, and made him a heavenly man on earth. It enabled him to suffer the loss of all things, and to count them but dung. As a heavenly man on earth, he now runs on to Him as the prize he hopes to win, and possess for ever. He desires to know Christ better, to have the power of His resurrection more fully working in him, and to experimentally enter into the fellowship of His sufferings as the rejected One by man. The apostle weeps over those who called themselves Christians, and yet whose walk was so in the flesh, and like the world, that they were enemies to the cross, by practically denying God's judgment of the flesh and sentence on the world by that cross. He could say of himself and others that they were heavenly people on earth, serving Christ in a world where He is disallowed, with resources, joys, and home in heaven, and looking from thence for the Savior to come, and change our body of humiliation, and fashion it like unto His body of glory, and thus give us bodily capacities to serve and honour Christ in eternal glory.

In the fourth chapter, we are reminded that God will supply all our need here, not grudgingly, but according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus; and that, however trying the path, we are competent to go through it all, through the strength which Christ supplies. Paul can rejoice in the Lord always, though a prisoner for His sake. He speaks of the ministration of temporal supplies, sent to him from Philippi, as an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice, acceptable, well pleasing to God.

We trust we need not bring further testimony from the scriptures to show the great variety of ways Christ is presented for our soul's blessing; and when this is considered, does it not behove us, if we would be wise and faithful servants, to heed the inspired exhortation, to

grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ {2 Pet. 3:18}?

Things New and Old 27:29-36.

Deliverance: *or* *Am I Wretched, Or Giving Thanks?* *A Few Thoughts on Romans 7 and 8*

The *doctrine* of the believer's being dead to the law, and his being married to another who has been raised up from among the dead, as the alone source of fruit-bearing, is set forth in the first six verses of Rom. 7; afterwards, we have a case supposed of the *experience* of a quickened soul under law struggling for deliverance. This deliverance is stated by one who has been delivered. *Practice* follows deliverance. The person supposed to be here speaking has life, for,

1. He knows that

the law is spiritual {Rom. 7:14}

-- that is, not merely applicable to outward conduct, but to the inward feelings and desires; and that he is fleshly, sold under sin -- the slave of sin.

2. He declares that the law is good, and resolves to be good, and to do good, but cannot.

3. He delights in the law after the inward man, and says the commandment is holy, just, and good. It is because his *understanding* is changed he consents to the law that it is good; because his *will* is changed, to will is present with him for good; and because he has a heart now according to God, he delights in the law of God according to the inward man. This reveals his *state*, and that he is born of God; but the context shows also that he is occupied neither with Christ nor with the Holy Ghost, but with self.

But though he has *life*, he is really under law, and, through his struggling with the law, learns,

1. That in him (his flesh) *no good* dwells (Rom. 7:18).

2. That sin dwells in him (Rom. 7:20).

3. That he has no power to perform that which is good, so that he is brought into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. He finds that he is powerless to overcome indwelling evil by *efforts* of law-keeping. Three profitable lessons, but often learnt through deep distress and humiliation of spirit. And having found out by experience, though painfully, that *sin dwells in him*, that his whole Adam nature is sinful, with *no good* in it, and that he has *no power* over it, he is truly

wretched {Rom. 7:24},

and cries out for a deliverer to bring him out of it:

Who shall deliver me? {Rom. 7:24}.

Then he finds that God has already done this for him, through Jesus Christ our Lord; and, believing this, he thanks God. He now has soul-deliverance, and waits for the deliverance of his body, for God's purpose is that we shall

be conformed to the image of his Son {Rom. 8:29}.

He may have received forgiveness of sins before, but now he finds he is delivered from sin and the law by the death of Christ, and from that time he has a *new experience*. No doubt, among many other profitable lessons, such learn that *experience* never gives peace with God, but that faith in the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ always does.

In Rom. 3-7 God is the *Justifier* of the ungodly, the Reconciler of His enemy -- man, and the *Deliverer* from sin. The law, instead of justifying, condemned; instead of reconciling, gives the knowledge of sin; and instead of delivering, brings him in guilty, and under the curse. Yet the law is

holy {Rom. 7:12},

because, instead of excusing sin, it exposes sin; the law is

just {Rom. 7:12},

because it judges even the motions of sin, as well as sins committed; and the law is

good {Rom. 7:12},

if a man use it lawfully. Our sins are forgiven on the ground of Christ having died for us, but we are delivered from that evil principle in us (sin) by death, for Christ having

died unto sin once {Rom. 6:10},

we have died with Him, and are now alive unto God in Him who is alive again, and that for evermore.

As to his experience now --

1. *His eye is off self and the law*, he looks to God in Christ, and becomes occupied with all that divine grace has accomplished for him in that work. Before he knew deliverance, it was self-occupation, "I" and "me" -- but now he is before God, thanking Him for what He has done through our Lord Jesus Christ. This produces an amazing change in the *state* of soul.

2. *He has God's thoughts, instead of his own about himself*. He now knows that he has two natures of very opposite qualities --

that which is born of the flesh,

and

that which is born of the Spirit {John 3:6}:

the former he sees as having been judged by God on the cross; the latter he knows is a new creation in Christ, in which God always views him. He is aware that both these natures are unchanging in their moral qualities, for

that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit {John 3:6}.

Both these natures are in the believer; the one acts out what is only evil {Gen. 6:5},

the other what is for the glory of God. In looking at himself now, he takes sides with God, and, recognising these two natures, he concludes,

So then with the mind [or new nature] I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh [or old nature] the law of sin (Rom. 7:25).

3. *He has done with himself* as to having any standing in the flesh before God, and as to confidence in it; for God has given him a new state, and put him on entirely different ground before Him. Not only is he forgiven, but God has delivered him from his old fleshly state, and given him a new place before Him. He is no longer in Adam, but in Christ Jesus; not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwells in him. This is a real deliverance, and, *believing* God's testimony concerning it, we have, by the Spirit, the comfort and power of it; for

There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

What a wide contrast now as to state and standing, and what comfort and rest the soul has that simply receives God's testimony!

4. *He has power over sin.* If he thinks of sin in the flesh, he remembers that God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin *condemned sin in the flesh*. It is gone thus for ever to faith, under the judgment of God. If he considers that in his flesh no good dwells, he knows that his standing before God now is *not in the flesh*, but in Christ Jesus. And now, instead of being helpless as to sin and its captivity, he finds he has power to walk in the light, as God is in the light, to resist the devil; and to overcome the world. He knows that by the gift of the Holy Ghost he is connected with a triumphant Christ. He is conscious of being set free, and that SIN is no longer his master; and, looking up, he can say, that

the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2).

Thus, having a new nature, and the gift of the Holy Ghost, the two great requirements of the law are fulfilled *in him* -- love to God, and love to man; though he is not under law, and he walks

not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4).

In the scriptures we have thus far looked at, it may be well to observe, that there are four laws brought before us:

1. "*The law of God*," the demands of which even a quickened soul finds himself powerless to answer (Rom. 7:22).

2. "*The law of my mind*," the resolution of a quickened soul to obey God (Rom. 7:23).

3. "*The law of sin and death*," the principle of enmity and antagonism of the natural man to God, of insubjection to His will; as another has said, "that deadly principle which ruled in us before as alive in the flesh."

4. "*The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*" -- the principle and power of that new life given us in Christ by the Holy Ghost, who now dwells in us.

The soul thus brought into liberty, or set free by divine grace, is delivered in three ways:

1. *By death.* Our old man is crucified with Christ, for God condemned

sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}

in the death of His own spotless and well-beloved Son. We have thus

died unto sin {Rom. 6:10}

have died with Christ {Rom. 6:8, see New Trans., JND},

and are clear from the law, having *died* to that in which we were held; and can a dead man have lusts or sin?

2. As

not under the law, but under grace {Rom. 6:14},

sin shall not have dominion over us. We are now

in Christ Jesus {1 Cor. 1:30},

brought into the full and abiding favour of God. Faith knows no other position. And will this lead us to sin? Shall we not rather have our fruit unto holiness? (Rom. 6).

3. *By the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*, bringing us into a new order of things -- new life, new position and state. Will, then, this new life and power in the Holy Ghost lead us to sin; or shall we thus be strengthened to resist the devil, and to abstain from all evil?

We are set free, then,

1. As to *conscience*, by the death of Christ, in whom God condemned

sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}.

2. As to *state and position*, as not in the flesh, but in Christ; and the Spirit dwelling in us, and not under law, but under grace.

3. As to *experience*, sin no longer has dominion over us, but having love in our hearts to God and man, and power by the Spirit to overcome, we find the mind of the Spirit to be life and peace.

4. As to practice,

who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit {Rom. 8:1}.

What a deliverance! What praise and worship it calls forth! What never-ending cause of thanksgiving to God! Surely we may say to the disconsolate believer

"Look off unto Jesus, and sorrow no more."

The *comfort* of this deliverance we have

in believing {Rom. 15:13}.

Our *power* for the enjoyment of it, and for life and godliness, is the Holy Ghost, and we are told that if we are led of the Spirit, we are not under law; and if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. Before deliverance it was all "I," "me," and "my," but after deliverance, CHRIST becomes the object of faith, and the Holy Ghost the power for holiness. We can therefore do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us.

As to the Spirit, we may observe that --

1. He gives us

life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:2).

2. He dwells in us as a divine Person -- the Spirit that raised up Jesus from among the dead, and shall

quicken your mortal bodies (Rom. 6:14).

The Holy Ghost Himself dwells in our bodies (Rom. 8:11).

3. He is our power to

mortify the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13).

Observe, it does not say “the body,” but,
the deeds of the body.

4. He is

the Spirit of adoption {Rom. 8:15},

to make us know we are God’s children. He forms affections and thoughts in us suited to such a relationship, leads us, and

whereby we cry, Abba, Father (Rom. 8:15).

5. He is the

firstfruits of the Spirit (Rom. 8:23),

because, by-and-by, the Spirit will be poured out upon all flesh.

6. He is the Helper of our infirmities in prayer, and makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:26).

7. He teaches us to wait for the redemption of our body (Rom. 8:23).

Thus we have brought before us something of *the power* that works in a delivered soul. Ought we not, then, to

abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost {Rom. 15:13}?

In the old-creation line of things, we have sin, flesh, death, sufferings, groanings, and infirmities, often struggling under law; but in the new creation we have deliverance from sin, life in the Spirit, thanksgiving, peace; we are in Christ, and the Spirit in us -- all things working together for our good -- are more than conquerors through every trouble,

are not under the law, but under grace {Rom. 6:14},

having no condemnation, and knowing no separation.

But be it remembered, that, though so blessedly delivered, and walking in the Spirit, we can never forget that *the flesh is in us*; but the flesh is not *us*, for *we* are in Christ, and are not in the flesh before God. Yet we never lose the sense that in us, that is in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing; we know what the conflict between the two natures is, and find our communion with the Father interrupted the moment we trust the flesh, and walk in it. Besides this, the delivered soul groans --

1. As having a mortal body: for

we that are in this tabernacle do groan (2 Cor. 5:4).

In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven {2 Cor. 5:2}

-- our glorified body. He knows that he has a

mortal body (Rom. 8:11),

liable to disease and pain.

2. Groanings within.

Ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, *even we ourselves groan within ourselves*, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:23).

This is more than suffering in our bodies; for, having the Spirit, the affections and thoughts are according to Christ, the suffering and rejected One, who is coming, not only for the redemption of our body, but to bring even this groaning creation into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

3. Unutterable groanings in prayer, for

the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered {Rom. 8:26}.

How many groans the Lord Jesus will hush when He comes again! How blessed is the thought that when *Christ, who is our life*, shall be manifested, we also shall be manifested with Him in glory (Col. 3:4)! Meanwhile may our hearts be taken up with Him, stand fast in the liberty wherewith He has made us free, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God!

Things New and Old 26:253-262.

Deliverance

(A reply to E. F. Ventnor.)

The case you name is not an uncommon one, where souls have been converted during revival preachings, or where the preaching has been chiefly the *love* of God shown, as you say, in the gift of His dear Son. Blessed and most important as this is, yet if the sinner's utter lost condition is not understood, the end of all flesh before God, and the righteousness of God in the way He has met that lost condition by the propitiation of Christ, there may be joy in believing the love of God for a time, but assuredly, conflicts and doubts will follow, and may last for years.

If you turn to the Gospel of John, you will find first the blessed Person of the Son of God (John 1:1-18). Then He is presented to us as the Lamb of God, bearing away sin. And He tells us,

The Son of man must be lifted up {John 12:34}.

The awful character of sin is thus implied, and the one only infinite Sacrifice that has met it: and thus is maintained the righteousness of God in reference to sin. Then the way is cleared to reveal the love of God, as the spring and source of all in the gift of His Son.

If you turn now to Romans, you will find the great foundation truth on which peace with God rests; the Righteousness of God. This is fully revealed in chapters 1 to 4. Has the one you name learnt this, that she is guilty in God's sight, only guilty; and by all efforts at law keeping cannot be righteous, still guilty. And that God is just, righteous, in justifying her through the propitiation of the death of Jesus? When she thought she was born again, did she know that she had eternal redemption through the blood of Jesus? She could not, in the least, know this, unless she had first been made to know that she was a helpless slave of sin and Satan. She may have these lessons to learn yet. Oh, how blessed that God takes up a poor slave and sinner, that cannot help herself. If she sees how God has been glorified by the death of Jesus, even as to her sins, and also sin, her whole case has been met to the glory of God.

Then she may see, in Rom. 4, how God reckons her righteous, and in the end of that chapter, that this is on the principle of the substitution of Christ by faith. God accounts the believer righteous in this way. He has raised up from the dead our Substitute, Jesus our Lord,

who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification {Rom. 4:25}.

Now see the consequences of this act of God in raising up Jesus for our justification:

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:1}.

This being settled, we now know and enjoy the love of God, and we are now shown how God in all this has revealed His love. Thus the righteousness of God gives us peace; and the love of God shed abroad in the heart enables us to joy in God.

It is amazing that we poor, guilty sinners have, in divine righteousness, been brought into this grace, or favour, wherein we

stand. But if you turn to Eph. 1 you will find this was the eternal purpose of God; and, according to that purpose, we are accepted, or He has

taken us into favour in the beloved.

You may say, "How can this be, since the person I name has such dreadful conflicts with the devil and wicked spirits?" Is it not in this very Epistle (Eph. 6:12, see also New Trans., JND) that we have the fullest account of such dreadful conflict, even with wicked spirits in the heavenlies? How important then is it to have on the whole armour of God. Is every part of the armour on this tried soul? Is there any tampering with error? any unrighteousness of conduct allowed? Is there preparedness to tell out the gospel to others? or are the gospel shoes taken off, and laid aside? The shield of faith must not be let down, God is faithful. We must be covered with the certainty of God's salvation. Is the word of God neglected, and then praying always? May our God lead that tried one from herself to these scriptures, and use them in help and deliverance.

Things New and Old 28:250-252.

Prophetical Outlines

Seven Lectures

on

*The Second Coming and Kingdom
of the Lord Jesus Christ*

Delivered in Leeds

By

H. H. SNELL

LONDON:

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Lecture 1: The Scripture Ground of Perfect Peace with God

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together (Rom. 7:24, 25; 8:1-17).

If it appear strange to you, beloved friends, that I should begin a series of discourses on the second coming and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ with such a subject as “The Scripture Ground of Perfect Peace with God,” I would say that my reasons for so doing are these: In the first place, I find that the Holy Ghost has, in the Old Testament Scriptures, remarkably connected together the sufferings of Christ and the glories that follow; and in the New Testament, where so much about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is brought before us, it is generally in connection with His sufferings. There is great danger, too, in the present day, of persons being occupied with subjects associated with the Lord’s second coming in what I would call a political way; that is, looking at the various events of Scripture very much like a person studies the political events of the present age. This may gratify the intellect, but be assured that such will find very little blessing to their souls. To be merely occupied with prophetic events apart from Christ Himself, I am persuaded is not the path of the Spirit; for the sufferings and death of Christ are the very foundation of the glories that will yet be revealed. But there is another reason why I start with the present subject. I would ask, -- How is it possible for any one to be waiting for God’s Son from heaven, and to be crying truthfully

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}

(which, I apprehend, every Christian ought to do according to the last chapter of Revelation), while he has any doubt as to his acceptance in Christ, and is not assured of present salvation, and eternal deliverance from the wrath to come? Therefore, it occurred to me, that we ought to devote a little time at the very outset on the true ground of peace, especially for the sake of any who have not yet found peace and rest before God, and seek to persuade them to look at this subject solemnly as in God’s presence, and in the light of His revealed truth.

Let me say at once, beloved friends, that that person who talks about making his peace with God manifests the greatest possible ignorance -- ignorance of himself, and ignorance of God; and if there be a soul here to-night who entertains such a thought, I entreat him from this moment to discard it altogether from his mind, and to take the place of an inquirer as to the Scripture ground of true peace with God.

There are many people in the present day who seem to imagine that they have before them a pair of scales suspended from a balance, and that they put all their good deeds, as it were, into one scale, and all their bad deeds into the other, and if they can only conclude that their good deeds outweigh their bad deeds, then they think there is some hope of their salvation. My beloved friends, God has settled the matter. In His holy word He tells us that salvation is

not of works, lest any man should boast {Eph. 2:9}.

Another large class of persons are diligently seeking to get peace with God by law-keeping, observing certain commandments, religious ordinances, and devoting themselves to charitable doings, and the like. These people, too, are most particular that they should not infringe on a certain routine on the so-called Sabbath day; that they should not fail in certain duties; that they should not take the name of the Lord in vain, and many other things, which are very good in their place; but the snare is, that they imagine, and vainly hope, by such religiousness, they may possibly obtain salvation at last. They little think that that same law of Moses, which tells them the things that I have referred to, says also,

Thou shalt have no other gods before me {Ex. 20:3},

and

Thou shalt not covet {Ex. 20:17}.

How, then, could they stand before God on the ground of law-keeping? But, beloved friends, I am not going to occupy time to-night in going over the various ways in which souls are being deceived by their mistaken attention to God's holy and just law, but refer to one verse of Scripture, which is found in the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans, the twentieth verse, to show the fallacy of expecting peace with God on such ground:

By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin {Rom. 3:20}.

There are some dear people -- true, I trust, but badly taught -- who are trying to get peace with God on the ground of experience. Now, I am not speaking against Christian experience, or going to define what it should be; but I am sure experience never gives peace -- peace with God. The seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans plainly shews that. The more the writer of that chapter looked at himself the more miserable he felt. He turned himself over a great many times, so that a considerable part of the chapter is occupied with the expression of his feelings and experiences; but he could only come at last to this conclusion --

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}.

Experience, then, is not the true ground of peace.

Another point I would call attention to, before entering upon the positive side of our subject, and it is this, that the work of the Spirit in the soul is not given to us in Scripture as the ground of peace. Multitudes of dear people -- truly anxious souls, souls, no doubt, taught in some way of God -- are continually looking at the work of the Spirit within them for evidences, and such never have settled peace. If you read the first seven chapters of this epistle to the Romans, (which especially sets before us God's way of saving and justifying, on the ground of righteousness as well as grace, the sinner that believes in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ,) you will find that the work of the Spirit is scarcely alluded to. But in these chapters, where the subjects of justification and peace are looked at over and over again, you will find that the apostle invariably presents Christ -- Christ crucified and risen -- as the only ground of peace and justification.

And when the soul has been brought to find rest before God on the ground of the already accomplished work of Jesus, as we have at the end of the seventh and the beginning of the eighth chapter, you then see that the work and operations of the Spirit of God are largely entered into, as instruction needed by those who have peace with God in the way of faith. This, then, is the divine order. I would not, therefore, say one word to an anxious soul about the work of the Spirit; but I would present to him the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, crucified for sinners, whom God raised from the dead, as God's way of saving lost sinners that believe on Him. Though every truly awakened soul is regenerated by the Spirit, still the Spirit, through the Scriptures, points him to Christ, and Christ alone, as the ground of peace. But when he has believed, the Spirit of God is sent forth into his heart as the earnest, and the Spirit of adoption; He anoints him, seals him, takes possession of him, leads him, and teaches him all the wilderness way, until he meets the Lord in the air, when he will have possession of what his heart has so long desired, and more than his thoughts ever conceived.

If then the question be asked, What *is* the true ground of peace with God? I would say that the ground of peace with God is the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Wonderful it is to be able to say, that the source of peace with God is God Himself. It is not from man to God, but from God to man. Only think of this, that God, in His infinite grace, in the perfection of His own love, has given that most wonderful of all gifts, His only begotten Son, to redeem us from all iniquity; so that now, through an already accomplished work, we may have full and abiding peace and rest in God's holy presence, without a question, a fear, or a cloud.

There are three great reasons why many anxious and sincere souls have not peace with God. One is, that they have not fully received the truth of Scripture recorded in this eighth verse of the eighth of Romans, that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).

The second reason is the sense of their own transgressions, the burden of the sins that they themselves have committed. Their consciences have no rest. Every now and then old sins rise up and stare them in the face, so that they are greatly troubled. The third, and perhaps the most important of the reasons, is one's self. Let us look at each of these three points.

In the first place, be it remembered that the statement,

they that are in the flesh cannot please God,

is God's truth, whether men acknowledge it or not. It is God's own verdict of what man is in the flesh. If a person is not clear on this point, if he has not received it as a divine revelation, if he has not grasped it as the truth of the living God, he will be continually thinking about mending, improving, altering -- doing something or other to commend himself to God. He will be, in some way or other, looking at self; sometimes, it may be, puffed up with pride, at others cast down with despair. He will be thinking of himself, his usefulness, his benevolence, his piety. In some shape or form, he will be continually recurring to self, unless he sees that God, with one stroke, as it were, has decided the whole matter for him, that

in the flesh {Rom. 8:8},

whether educated or uneducated, virtuous or vicious, religious or profligate, he cannot please Him. Dear friends, I specially and affectionately commend this to any of you who have not settled peace with God. I say that, if you are not clear as to that great principle of divine truth, you will be continually looking at yourself, reckoning upon resources in yourself, raising expectations from yourself; and thus you cannot have peace with God. But believing that no carnal efforts can please God, you then become compelled to look altogether outside yourself for peace, and gladly find it presented to you by God Himself in the death and resurrection of His beloved Son.

As to the second point -- sins, I mean actual transgressions, things that a person knows he has committed, and feels to be wicked in God's sight. These things stare him in the face. Every now and then they rise upon his conscience with such force and freshness, that sins of a twenty or thirty years' history come upon him with the guilt of those of to-day. This fills him with distress, and he cries out in bitterness of soul that he is a guilty sinner, and that he does not know any one so vile as himself. He is taken up

with his sins. It is evident, that the more he is occupied with his sins the more depression of mind and unhappiness he must have. He may struggle, groan, be diligent in religiousness in ten thousand ways, but he will find no relief till he sees that all has been atoned for by Jesus, the Sin-bearer.

As to the third reason -- one's self, you may not all understand what I mean. I will therefore try to make it as clear as I can. By one's self I do not mean outward evil that a person has committed, but the inward things of the heart, which no creature is aware of but one's self, and God who searches the heart. I refer to those horrible corruptions, those vile thoughts, those lusts, affections, inclinations, and motives that we should be ashamed to tell to any one; those workings of selfishness, pride, temper, and all the ten thousand abominations of self that may not be manifested to a single being round about us. This is where many people are. They are groaning over the miseries of self. They have not got deliverance from self. They are not so much troubled, it may be, like some others, about having actually committed terribly bad things, as they are about what they are in themselves. Now God in His Word has fully met all these difficulties, so that the soul may be in perfect rest and peace before Him, and through His marvelous grace be happier in His presence than in the presence of any one else.

I need not tell you that it is recorded in Scripture, over and over again, that Christ was the bearer of sins. --

He bare our sins in His own body on the tree {see 1 Pet. 2:24}.

In the third verse of the eighth chapter of Romans we read,

God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh {Rom. 8:3}.

Thus we get Christ presented to us as lifted up upon the tree, God's own Son the bearer of sins, and God Himself condemning the sins of the sinner in the person of His own Son. So that the sinner who believes can think of all his sins in the light of God's holy presence, and looking back on the cross of Christ can say,

He was wounded for my transgressions, he was bruised for mine iniquities: the chastisement of my peace (or that purchased my peace) was upon Him; and with His stripes I am healed {see Isa. 53:5}.

Thus if God condemned my transgressions in His Son Jesus Christ, surely it would be to accuse Him of unrighteousness, not to freely and fully pardon and justify me of every part of the guilt. Therefore, in the fifth chapter of this epistle, we are told that we are

justified by faith, and have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ {see Rom. 5:1}.

With regard to deliverance from "self," this terrible plague, Scripture gives us clear instruction, especially in the sixth of Romans, and in the epistles to the Galatians and Colossians. There we learn that God has judged and set aside this evil nature which the Christian has so painfully to contend with. It is what the Christian finds in himself that so peculiarly troubles him -- what he is as a man in the flesh; and I say we have in Scripture God's own account as to how He has met our need in this respect, so that the soul may be in perfect rest and peace, so far as the conscience

is concerned. In the last part of the seventh of Romans we find a person exclaiming,

O wretched man that I am! {Rom. 7:24}.

Now, observe here, it is not "O wretched sins that I have committed!" That might be quite true also. But it is,

O wretched *man*!

the *wretched man that I am*. It is what he is himself. I was struck the other day by a lady telling me, that when she was quite a child she was groaning over her wretched self. A gentleman who was near her on one occasion said, "What can that little dear know about sin?" It was not, she said, sins that she had committed, it was not actual transgression against God that so troubled her, but it was the vileness of herself. Be assured, dear friends, it is this that the Spirit of God makes known to souls; for He teaches, that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8}.

The cry is,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me? {Rom. 7:24}.

Deliver me from what? From my sins? from my transgressions? No; but from a deeper thing than these. From the thing that caused the transgressions; or, shall I say it? from the machine, as it were, that gives birth to the transgressions; from the root from which all the transgressions spring; and the cry is,

Who shall deliver me (from this horrible self)? from the body of this death? {Rom. 7:24}.

Now, I ask, how did the author of the cry get deliverance? Ah! not by looking at self. A dear young lady, a friend of mine, some years ago, said to me, she thought she was going on in the blessed way, and was getting very religious; for, she said, "I have written down all the sins that I can remember, and I read them over every morning, hoping I shall get good and grow humble and pious by so doing." Poor dear soul, what good could she get from that? Why, if taught by the Spirit of God, she would come to this,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

You will never get deliverance from looking at self in any shape, never! -- good self, bad self, religious self, educated self, or moral self, reformed self, intellectual self; for Scripture declares, that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8}.

How then did this troubled soul get deliverance? Ah! the answer is this, he looked to God. He had been running away from God; and that may be what some of you have been about. Yes, running away from God; for you do not know how God loves poor sinners. You have never thought of that perhaps, that

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son {John 3:16}

to save sinners. Ah! have you never seen, that the love of God, in Christ crucified and risen, to poor perishing sinners, is the source of all true peace?

Who shall deliver me? {Rom. 7:24}

is the cry. And mark the next words:

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 7:25}.

That is how he obtained deliverance. If a soul say, Will God deliver a vile sinner like me? Yes He will; for though He is a just

God, He is a Savior. And you will never find peace, friends, unless you get it from God, and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall deliver me?

I thank God --

there is the voice of praise --

I *thank* God --

why? --

through Jesus Christ our Lord.

That is where he got deliverance -- from God, and through our Lord Jesus Christ. So that God Himself is the very one whose arm has brought salvation; and Himself it is who preaches peace by Jesus Christ. And God Himself it is who declares, that whosoever cometh unto Him, through His only begotten Son, He will in no wise cast out, but save such to the uttermost. Therefore it is that we can say,

I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now how simple this is. There is not only deliverance from the guilt of transgression, but deliverance from the whole thing -- one's self. The wretched man, with all his miserable experiences, all the things that grieved, and vexed, and convicted the awakened conscience -- all that made him feel how wicked he was, he saw fully met in the cross of Christ. How wondrously God came in to save him as he was -- in his sins, in his guilt, in his ruin, a lost man; and He saved him perfectly, and for ever, through the atoning work of His Son Jesus Christ.

But, beloved friends, we have more than that brought before us here. There is not only peace for a poor ruined sinner in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, but God would have His children filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding as to the knowledge of how He has come in and met us, and delivered us, and the acceptance we now have before Him; so that we may be able intelligently, and in all the liberty of love, to enter into His presence, and worship Him, as redeemed by the blood of the cross, and accepted in the Son of His love. We find in the next verse the experience this groaning one now has as a Christian -- a saved person. I call attention to this fact, because it is immensely important. Many persons think they ought not, after they have believed on the Lord Jesus for salvation, to feel an evil thought springing up in their hearts, or evil desires, or evil suggestions, as if regeneration and reconciliation took away their evil nature entirely from them. Such, however, every Christian feels is not the case. Mark, therefore, what follows.

So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin {Rom. 7:25}.

That is, he looks upon the wretched man, what he was in the flesh, no longer as himself; he regards "the flesh" as an enemy; he has disallowed it as unfit for God in the cross; he looks upon himself now as a person who has got another nature, he is a new creation, he has another existence; he has life. It is this new nature in him that he now calls "I myself"; it is this principle, this nature, whatever we may call it, that serves the law of God; and it is "the flesh," that incurably bad self which he was groaning under, that still serves "the law of sin." I say that verse describes, as a matter of fact, what every Christian is. There is not a Christian living on the face of the earth that has not these two principles or natures; with one, that which is born of the Spirit, the new life, he himself

serves the law of God, but with the other nature, that which is born of the flesh, if he allow it to come into action, he can serve nothing but the law of sin. "The flesh" cannot please God, put into what shape you please; it is a corrupt tree, and cannot bring forth good fruit. The flesh cannot serve anything that is not carnal, and worldly, and evil; and the new nature, which is born of God and cannot sin, can never do anything contrary to the mind of God. These two principles, I say, are in every true Christian. The man, too, who enjoys settled peace with God through Christ, knows well that there is a warfare going on in him between those two principles, according to the apostle's words in Gal. 5:17:

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh;

and so far from their ever becoming united, it is added,

and these are contrary the one to the other.

It is immensely important that the believer should clearly see that he has this evil something in him which he must keep under, and not trust. Having life in Christ, he must cry to, and trust in, the Lord for strength, that he may be able,

through the Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body {see Rom. 8:13}.

Moreover, is it not an amazing comfort to the Christian to have the testimony of God's truth that the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ is the answer for his sins, and to know Jesus also on that cross as his Substitute, and that therefore everything of vile self has been virtually, judicially, and, according to righteousness, crucified, put to death with Him? Is not this what we are told in the sixth chapter of Romans?

Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin {Rom. 6:6}.

So that you see it was not merely sins that were laid upon Christ, but the old man was crucified with Him; not only that sins might be atoned for, but that sin, root and branch, the body of sin, might be annulled. If I did not know that, how could I venture to approach God? how could one be happy in His presence?

In accordance, then, with this blessed truth, we have in Rom. 6:11 the following instructions:

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead [or to have died] indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through [or in] Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are thus told by the Holy Ghost that we are to reckon about *ourselves* in this way:

Reckon ye also yourselves, &c.

While I know I have still this evil nature, I am to reckon that it has been judicially put to death, crucified in the cross of Christ, and buried in the grave of Christ. And be assured, beloved friends, you will never get the victory over self without this. You will never be at rest in the blessed portion God has given you in Christ, until you can see in the cross of Calvary God's righteous judgment of the flesh with its affections and lusts. There is a text to which I must now refer in connection with this subject, and I call attention to it because I believe it is often misunderstood. In Gal. 5:24, we read,

They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

Now, what does this mean? Does it not exactly fit in with what we have been considering? How have I crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts? The answer is plain. Because, as a believer, I have consented to God's just and righteous judgment of myself as a man in the flesh, as totally incapable of pleasing God, and unfit for His presence. I have not only consented to the justice of that judgment, but I have accepted it as my only ground to stand on, and that which God has in His mercy accomplished for me in Christ my Substitute; so that in this way I have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. I have thus set aside the flesh; I have crucified it; I have heard God declaring that my old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be annulled; and I have heartily agreed to it, and said, "Yes, that is a just and a righteous judgment." Faith does this, and sees that God is glorified in it. What a wondrous blessing this is! How exactly God has met our deep need! I know no parts of Scripture so full of comfort and blessing, so calculated to establish and support us, and to draw us out in devotedness to God, as those which show how completely and judicially God has set us aside as to the flesh, and yet secured our eternal acceptance before Him in Christ, giving us a standing in His presence, through the death and in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But further. We have been looking at Scriptures which show what God has accomplished for us in the death of His Son Jesus Christ. Now let us go a step further, because God has given abundant reason in His word why the believer should not only have peace, abiding peace, in His presence, but also be a joyful worshiper, and a happy, loving, obedient child. There are two points to which I am about to refer. One is the believer's standing in resurrection-life in Christ; and the other, the new relationships he is brought into with God and His beloved Son.

We read in Rom. 8:1:

There is therefore now no condemnation
-- to whom? --
to them which are in Christ Jesus.

Observe, it is a present blessing -- "now." It is to those who are "*in Christ Jesus*." This is a step beyond the cross of Christ. It is the other side of death. You will say, We were always in Christ according to God's eternal purpose. That is quite true; but I am not speaking of that now. Believers are now actually in Christ, partakers of His life, as risen from the dead. It is life in One who is on the other side of death.

Whatever were God's counsels and purposes, we had not union with Christ before His death. We are told that,

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone {John 12:24}.

It is clear from this that Christ was alone, and would have been alone, if He had not died. We could not have been in Him, there could have been no union, until after He had died; and therefore the Scripture tells us,

You hath *He* quickened [or made alive] who were dead in trespasses and sins {Eph. 2:1}.

But how? Quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places *in Christ Jesus*. We are not yet *with Christ*, but we are *in Christ*. Therefore we find in the second verse of this eighth chapter,

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death {Rom. 8:2}.

It is life, then, in a risen Christ. This is the point. It is not merely deliverance from wrath by the blood of the cross, but life in a risen Christ. Is not this, beloved friends, ground for abiding, solid peace, and also of communion with God? And will not such grace, if really known in power, make us willing to spend and be spent in His service? Oh, that we could all enter into the dignity and blessedness of having life in a risen Christ! A friend of mine some years ago visited a distant place where there were a great many Christians, and in writing to me he stated, "The Christians here do not know life." I fear that few Christians are really in their souls on this blessed ground of death and resurrection, and enjoying the reality of being *now* in Christ Jesus.

We have then, blessed be God! life in a risen Christ. Christ is our life. We have passed from death unto life; we are seated in Christ in heavenly places.

This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son {1 John 5:11}.

He that hath the Son hath life {1 John 5:12}

-- life in a risen Christ. We are risen with Christ. It is not only redemption *from* sin, but we are brought *to* God; hence we find in the fifth chapter of the Revelation that the song of the elders in glory is,

Thou . . . hast redeemed us *to* God {Rev. 5:9}.

It is not merely seeing what we have been delivered from that gives us joy, but seeing where we are brought -- made nigh to God in Christ Jesus, through His precious blood. Let us well consider this, and never forget what an unfailing title to blessing we have in the precious blood of Christ. It has brought us to God, nigh to God, into the presence of God. The blood of Christ has given us liberty to enter into the holiest, and a title to stand there, and share the inheritance with the blessed Lord. What a precious truth this is!

But I must take you to another important verse in this eighth chapter. It immediately follows the sweeping declaration,

They that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8}.

The words are most remarkable:

Ye are not in the flesh {Rom. 8:9}.

In the seventh chapter he says,

When we were in the flesh {Rom. 7:5},

and now he says, "Ye are not in the flesh." How is this? Because, as I have tried to prove, as a man in the flesh, you have been judged and put to death in your Substitute, the Lord Jesus Christ; so that you have now no existence before God as in the flesh. God knows you still have the flesh, and will discipline you if you walk in it; but He sees you in Christ, and not in the flesh. Now do receive this, beloved friends, as the revealed truth of God. I cannot tell you what an immense blessing it is to have clear knowledge of this from the testimony of God's word. Our first Adam standing is gone, so that the Holy Ghost says, "Ye are not in the flesh";

and it clearly must be the case, because you are in Christ. You cannot be in both as to your standing before God. You cannot be under condemnation and justification at the same moment. You cannot be in the first Adam condemned, and in the last Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, accepted at the same moment. No; the cross of Christ has ignored your old Adam standing; the guilt of it, the evil of it, the old man, with his affections and lusts, has been righteously dealt with in the cross of Christ, and put out of sight in His grave; and happy are those who are content that it should remain there. You have a new life in a risen Christ, and therefore it is that you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; and the life which you now live in the flesh is a life of faith upon the Son of God. You have a spiritual life. The Scripture says,

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life {John 3:36}

-- not shall have, but *hath* everlasting life. Yes, you have the present possession of eternal life. Beloved friends, I affectionately invite your attention to the passage we are now considering:

Ye are not in the flesh.

If you say, "I am in the flesh," all I can say is, that you contradict God's truth, and refuse the true grace of God. Be assured you can never have peace with God on any other ground than what He has accomplished for us in Christ. If you cannot submit to the words of the living God, farewell to any peace of soul; you cannot have it. No person can have peace with God who is not subject to His truth. Faith receives and bows to God's word. And oh! when we look at ourselves, and consider what poor, weak, miserable, wretched beings we are, we ought to rejoice with joy unspeakable when we find God telling us what He has done for us through the blood of Christ, and in Him risen and ascended. Blessed be His name! He has given us a standing in His own presence so perfect that He can say to us,

Ye are [not shall be, but are] complete in Him, who is the Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10}.

Is it not a precious truth that Christ has accomplished eternal redemption for us? How blessed to know that He now presents us in all the perfectness of His own acceptance before God!

But I must not pass over what follows about the indwelling Spirit.

If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you {Rom. 8:9}.

A person may say, "I don't think I have the Spirit of God dwelling in me." That may be, but we must not forget that Scripture says,

If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His {Rom. 8:9}.

It is a serious matter, beloved friends, to trifle with divine truths. We read,

Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you {Rom. 8:9}.

These are the words of God, and they are full of comfort and blessing.

Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father {Gal. 4:6}.

It is by the Spirit dwelling in us that we know and own Jesus Christ as Lord sitting at God's right hand. It is also by the Spirit dwelling in us that we have access unto the Father:

For through Him [that is, Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father {Eph. 2:18}.

Before quitting this point, I would refer once more to the Scripture I have already called attention to, because it now fits in so admirably with the whole we have considered.

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord,

or

in Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 6:11},

as the passage might be better rendered. This is the believer's life. He is to reckon in this way, that his life is in Christ Jesus, that Christ is his life.

Your life is hid with Christ in God {Col. 3:3}.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory {Col. 3:4}.

Now let us look at the "relationships" so blessedly brought out here. It is possible that a person might receive a very elevated standing without much affection. You or I might go into the South Sea Islands among persons who have no affection whatever for us; and we might have a very excellent position in the islands without any one manifesting true love toward us. But God, in His mercy, has given us the highest possible position -- in Christ Jesus in the heavens; as near to Himself as Christ is, and in all the acceptability of Christ; so that it can be truly said,

As He is, so are we in this world {1 John 4:17}.

Is Christ alive? So are we. Is Christ righteous? So are we. Is Christ nigh to God? So are we. As being in Christ ours is the most dignified standing possible. But beside this there is the highest character of relationship -- the relationship of sons. In the fourteenth verse we read,

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ {Rom. 8:14-17}.

My beloved friends, this is not dry doctrine, it is food for our souls. It is the true grace of God wherein we stand. In the epistle to the Galatians it is said,

Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus {Gal. 3:26};

which again shews that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is a son of God. He is a child of God, and the Father cares for, and watches over him. So you see it is a blessed, a wonderful reality. The old man is so set aside, that you are brought into a new creation, with new privileges and relationships. You are brought to know that you are in Christ, and He in you, and that you stand in this new relationship of sons of God. Therefore the service that is expected of you is the service of a son. I was in a house some time ago where there were a great many visitors, and not a sufficient number of servants to do the work. Some of the children kindly assisted in serving the visitors; but what a very different character of ministry theirs was to that of the hired servants. They were prompted simply by love. There was happy liberty; there was no fear of bondage connected with it. They served with

delight, caring for the honor of their father. And so our service to God should partake of this character. God has raised us up to this wonderful standing in a risen Christ at His own right hand, and brought us into the highest, the nearest, the dearest possible relationship to Himself -- that of sons. This is what the Holy Ghost teaches. We have not received the spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." And it is in the comfort of this truth that the weakest babe in Christ ought to be. It is here that the believer of yesterday ought to be. It is here that all believers should be, rejoicing in the thorough end of self, and finding in the Lord Jesus Christ life and righteousness, and that we are brought into the blessed relationship of sons to God. Relationship always moulds the affections, and guides the conduct.

There is another thing:

If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ {Rom. 8:17}.

Who can tell the full meaning of such glorious realities? Is it that we are to share the inheritance with Christ? that He will not enter upon the inheritance without us? Is it that Jesus is first coming from heaven for us, His joint-heirs? Is it this that the blessed Lord is coming for? Most certainly, for He who is heir of all things will take possession of every part of the inheritance, whether belonging to the heavens or to the earth. All things are to be put in subjection to Him. He is Lord of all; Lord of the living and of the dead. But He will first descend into the air, and we shall be changed and ascend to meet Him, and enter together upon the inheritance as joint-heirs with Him.

And now let me ask, what manner of people ought we to be? If this be the place, and if these be some of the blessings which we are brought into through the death and resurrection of Christ, and gift of the Holy Ghost, by the grace of God, I say, what should be the characteristics that we manifest down here? what should we show forth? We ought to be subject to Christ, to follow Christ; we ought to serve Him, and honor Him; and what else? We ought to wait for His return from heaven. Now observe, dear fellow Christians, that you have not to wait for everlasting life; we have seen that you already have that.

He that believeth on me *hath* everlasting life {John 6:47}.

You have not to wait for righteousness; that you have too.

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth {Rom. 10:4}.

You have not to wait for union with Christ, because you have that.

By one Spirit *are* we all baptized into one body {1 Cor. 12:13}.

You have not to wait for the Holy Ghost. You have seen that the Holy Ghost is given to them that believe; and

if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His {Rom. 8:9}.

What, then, have you to wait for? You have to wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change this vile body and fashion it like unto His own glorious body. There is nothing else to wait for. You will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and be for ever with and like your loving Lord. The Lord bless and preserve you, dear friends! I earnestly desire that no person may go out of this room without being assured of salvation through the word of the living God. I hope you will see that it is entirely

through the death of Christ that you are delivered from the wrath to come, and that you stand now in acceptance before God in Christ risen. As we are told in the first of Ephesians: We are

blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus {see Eph. 1:3}.

May you, beloved friends, enter into these things, and be earnest Christians, doing the Lord's will from your hearts, and glorying in those blessed truths of Scripture by which you are assured of perfect, abiding, and uninterrupted peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lecture 2: The Coming of the Lord, the Christian's Hope

And if 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 (John 14:3).

And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself (Phil. 3:20, 21).

For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. . . . And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. . . . He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly: Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20).

I have read these several Scriptures, beloved friends, because my subject to-night is, "The Coming of the Lord Jesus, the Christian's Hope." Observe, the subject is not the *day* of the Lord, but the *coming* of the Lord. The distinction is very obvious in Scripture. For instance, the *day* of the Lord was Israel's hope. The prophets are full of *the day of the Lord*; but no Old Testament writer gives us the coming of the Lord as the Christian's hope; by which I mean the Lord descending into the air, when all who are Christ's that are alive, and all who are Christ's that are in their graves, will be caught up to meet Him. Our subject to-night is not the Lord coming *with* His saints, but the Lord coming *for* His saints. And I call attention to these distinctions, because it seems to me utterly impossible for any one to get clear thoughts as to the particular hope of the Christian, unless he distinguishes between those things which differ. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself said,

If 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 {John 14:3}.

This is not the Lord coming to us, as many have supposed, in the article of death, when the believer falls asleep in Jesus; for then the Christian is spoken of as

absent from the body, and present with the Lord {see 1 Cor. 5:8};

or, as having departed to be with Christ. But nowhere in Scripture is the death of the believer spoken of as the Lord coming to him.

Neither is there in this saying of Christ one word about judgment; in fact, we get no such idea in Scripture as the believer looking for a judgment day, to decide whether he is to be saved or not. I am not ignorant that many who do not carefully consider Scripture for themselves, but learn from others, think that what is called the parable of the sheep and the goats is the general assize, the great judgment day; and that until that time no person can be certain whether he is saved or whether he is lost, because he must

first go before that tribunal. I am aware that many think Scripture favours the thought of one general judgment; but I am bold to assert, that no Christian, prayerfully seeking the help and guidance of the Holy Ghost on the subject, and comparing one part of Scripture with another, with a mind subject to God's word, would allow such a doctrine to stand. In the first place, in the account of the sheep and the goats, there is no thought of resurrection at all. In the second place, it is Christ as King, when He comes in glory to the earth, having the nations before Him. And in the third place, the whole parable, which I cannot enter into now, clearly shows that it is a judgment which will be held during the personal reign of the Lord, when He deals with the nations according as they have dealt kindly or unkindly with His messengers, His brethren in the flesh -- a remnant of Jews, who will publish "the gospel of the kingdom" after the rapture of the saints.

The Christian is not taught in the New Testament to expect death. On the contrary, he is told, in the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, that

we shall not all sleep {1 Cor. 15:51};

that is, that all believers will not die, because there will be some living on the earth when the Lord Jesus comes from heaven. Death then cannot be the hope of the believer; for we may or we may not fall asleep in Jesus. Certain it is that some will not. No one knows whether any of us will die or not. God has not told us; but He did make it known by a special revelation to Peter, and Paul knew also that he would fall asleep. They needed this special instruction about themselves, because the general teaching of Scripture was, that believers were to wait for Christ's return from heaven.

The question is, What are we to understand by those words of the blessed Lord,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself {John 14:3}?

In the first place, observe, that in making this remark our Lord was speaking to persons who were saved. Judas was not present. He had gone out. The eleven were there with Him, and He addressed them as clean ones.

Now ye are *clean* through the word which I have spoken unto you {John 15:3}.

He had been rejected by Israel, and had pronounced their house "desolate." He was just going to suffer, the just for the unjust, on the cross. Anticipating that Israel would be cast off, and the Church of the living God called out, and formed by the descent of the Holy Ghost, subsequent to His glorification at the right hand of God, He gives us, in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth chapters of John, great principles of peculiar teaching that were never found in the Scriptures before. These chapters are full of deepest instruction for those who now form the Church of God, and therefore, among other precious things, He gives this blessed and soul-comforting hope --

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3}.

We are not left to conjecture about these things. The Scriptures plainly point out to us the meaning of such words. For instance, in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, where we have an account of the Lord's ascension into heaven, we are told that there were two men in white apparel, two angelic messengers, who came and spake to the men of Galilee, the disciples who were watching the Lord, and had seen Him go up higher and higher, till a cloud received Him out of their sight. While still gazing upwards, watching where the blessed Jesus, who was so dear to them, had gone, these messengers said,

Why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus -- not another Jesus, but this same Jesus -- which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven {Acts 1:11}.

Did they see Him go up *personally*? Did their eyes behold Him? Was it a *personal* and a *visible* ascent? Certainly. Well then He shall come *personally* and *visibly*; for He "shall so come *in like manner* as ye have seen Him go into heaven." The interpretation therefore is clear; there is no mystery about it --

I will come again, and receive you unto myself {John 14:3}.

There is nothing about the world here. Not one word about the ungodly. It is Christ Himself who is coming. "I will come again." It is not "I will send angels for you." For surely Christians are too precious to the heart of Christ even to trust them to angels. They are His own flesh and bone. He therefore says,

I will come again, and receive *you unto myself*; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3}.

In pursuing our enquiry, the question may fairly be asked, How did the apostles and Christians in the apostles' days understand such words? Are there any proofs in the epistles that they understood they were to wait for Christ to come personally from heaven? Most assuredly there are; and that is why I read in the third chapter of the Philippians these words:

For our conversation

-- or, rather, our citizenship, our country, the place that belongs to us now --

is in heaven {Phil. 3:20}.

I was trying to show in the last lecture that a Christian is a person now in Christ in heavenly places. If a man, therefore, is not in Christ in heavenly places, he is not a Christian at all. If a man says, "I am not a Mahomedan, I am not a Jew, I am not a Pagan; I make a profession of having embraced Christianity, because I belong to Christian parents," that is not being a Christian. A Christian is a person who has fled for refuge to Jesus at God's right hand, as the only hope set before him in the gospel. He is a person who has been taught and regenerated by the Holy Ghost -- one who is resting simply on Christ Jesus the Son of God for salvation; he is therefore in Christ, and has passed from death unto life. Hence the apostle, speaking of himself and others, says,

Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for -- for what? For death? No. For judgment? No. What, then?

We look for the Saviour.

Who is that? The answer is given --

The Lord Jesus Christ {Phil. 3:20}.

And what then? Why, when He comes, when we see Him, this body of humiliation will be

changed and fashioned like unto His glorious body {see Phil. 3:21}.

Christians in the apostles' days were, therefore, taught to look for Christ -- for Christ Himself. And if you turn to the first chapter in the first epistle to the Thessalonians, you will see precisely the same teaching -- that when they heard the gospel through the apostle,

they turned from idols to serve the living and true God {see 1 Thess. 1:9}.

Now, I believe that would satisfy a great many people in the present day; a great many sincere Christians too would, I fear, be perfectly contented with the two things, -- turning from idols, and serving God. But there was another thing that marked these early Christians, and the apostle by the Holy Ghost commended them for it, and that was, they waited for some one. For whom?

For His Son from heaven, . . . even Jesus, we are told, which delivered us from the wrath to come {1 Thess. 1:10}.

You see the Holy Ghost employs a variety of expressions in the different Scriptures to which I have called attention, to show that it was the Lord Himself who died on the cross to save sinners that they looked for. They waited for the same Jesus that was buried -- that came up from the dead and said,

A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have {Luke 24:39}

-- that went up into heaven, of whom the messengers which came unto the disciples testified, that

He shall so come in like manner {see Acts 1:11}.

Then we know that we shall enter upon eternal joy, and realize that change of body which will have capabilities of entering into the unutterable glories to which we are entitled through the blood of Jesus. This is indeed a blessed hope.

Having thus established from Scripture the fact that Christ is coming personally, that He is coming for His own, and that the

primitive Christians waited for Him, another question that naturally suggests itself is, "What will take place when Christ does thus come for His saints?" Before replying to this question, let me observe that this subject, as you must perceive, is not dry doctrine. It is the warmest, most soul-stirring, and one of the most eminently practical truths that Scripture sets before us. If a person say, "I do not trouble about the coming of the Lord; I do not hold it to be essential," all I can say is, that your heart, whoever you are, is not very fresh or fervent towards Christ; for whatever concerns Christ ought to concern you, if you are redeemed by His precious blood. If He is your life, and you are seated in Him in heavenly places, can you be indifferent to what He is about to do? I ask, Is it possible that a Christian's heart can be in that true and fervent state which it should be towards Christ, and be inattentive to the testimony of Scripture (even if he does not understand it), especially as to any thing connected with the person, work, glory, or coming of Christ?

We have in the epistles special revelations with regard to what will take place at the coming of the Lord Jesus: we are not left in ignorance about it. God was so gracious, before the canon of Scripture was complete, that from time to time, as His saints had difficulties, He met them with special instruction, so that we reap the benefit of their exercises and mistakes. For instance; the Corinthians had great difficulty as to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and there was a special revelation made to Paul and communicated to them. In the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians he writes, in the fifty-first verse,

Behold, I shew you a mystery;

that is, he then revealed something which up to that time had been a mystery.

Behold, *I shew you a mystery*; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 15:51-57}.

The mystery was this, that we (that is, we believers) shall all be changed -- our mortal bodies will be changed into immortal, fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. The bodies, too, of those who have died in Christ will be changed:

This corruptible shall put on incorruption {see 1 Cor. 15:54}.

And all this will occur

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye

-- the shortest conceivable space of time; so suddenly will this wonderful transformation take place.

There was another revelation made through Paul to the Thessalonian saints, who were in difficulty because they saw some of those, whom they knew to be saints, had died to all outward appearance like sinners, so that they could not understand where the difference was. The thought of the Lord's return was so fresh,

so fervent, and so real in the hearts of these Thessalonians, that they evidently thought that not one of them would die, but that they would all be alive and caught up when Christ came. They were constantly looking for the Lord to return from heaven; but some of their brethren died, so that they were very sorrowful and unhappy. But the Lord directed the apostle to write to them about it. He states in the fourth chapter of the first epistle, commencing at the fifteenth verse,

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord;

observe, *by the word of the Lord*, thus showing that there had been an especial word given him by the Lord, to meet the trouble of mind in which they then were. How blessed is this!

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [anticipate, or go before] them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air {1 Thess. 4:15-17}.

You see the apostle shows them that those who had slept in Jesus, and had been carried to their graves shall not be behind when the Lord comes, but that they will be raised first; that is, they will come out of their graves first; then the living saints will be changed; and then we shall all be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air. The air will be the meeting-place of Christ and His saints; and then we shall

ever be with the Lord. {1 Thess. 4:17}

So that you see we get, from these revelations to the Corinthian and Thessalonian saints, clear instruction as to what will take place when the Lord Jesus Christ descends personally into the air. Let us not forget that

He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven {see Acts 1:11},

and that then we shall be changed and caught up. For instance; suppose the blessed Lord should come whilst we are in this room, what would take place? Why, every one of us who are in Christ, and all saints around us in this large town, and all that are Christ's everywhere, living or dead, throughout the world, would be immediately changed,

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye {1 Cor. 15:52}.

This mortal body would instantly put on immortality. Christ's coming into the air would be like a mighty magnet. You have seen a powerful magnet, which when put within a certain distance, attracts small particles of metal to itself from all directions: just so the blessed Lord coming into the air will be like a magnet; for the dead in Christ shall come up out of their graves, and the living saints shall be changed, and all be caught up to meet the Lord.

There is another question, which, perhaps, may be more of a carnal than a spiritual quality, yet it is one which we often hear, and which ought to be met. It is this, -- *When* will Christ come? In the last book of Scripture, in the last page, and amongst the very last words of inspired truth, we have it stated three times that Christ is coming quickly. Oh, say you, that is very indefinite; cannot you tell me the year, if not the day or the hour, when this will happen? No, I cannot, because it is not revealed in Scripture,

but left in this indefinite way, I doubt not, that we may glorify Christ by waiting for Him. Some have, I know, ventured, mistakenly, I believe, but doubtless with the best intentions, to predict a given time, or a certain year for the coming of the Lord; but it is just because they did not understand the difference to which I have already called attention this evening, -- between the *coming* of the Lord for *us*, and the *day* of the Lord. They go to Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks and other dates, and wrongly supposing, as they do, that the day of the Lord and the coming of the Lord are the same, they try to prove by calculation when the various times will be fulfilled, and the period arrive for the day of the Lord to set in. Almost ever since we have been Christians, have we not heard of this year, that year, or another year, spoken of as the probable time for Christ's coming? Of course, we pay no attention to such statements, because we know that as being in Christ in heavenly places we are not, so to speak, in the region of dates, or times and seasons. I repeat, that the time of our Savior's coming *for us* is not revealed in Scripture. Is it not rather said, that

in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh
{Matt. 24:44}?

The times and the seasons are not given to us Christians in relation to our hope. The Scriptures put us into the blessed position of being delivered from the wrath to come through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ, and now presented in Christ Jesus in heaven, who is our righteousness and life before God; so that we have to faithfully serve, and patiently wait for God's Son from heaven, when we shall have the redemption of the body. Then our bodies will be capable of entering into all those joys and glories before us, which are secured for us by the precious blood of Christ. Whilst we wait, we are indwelt by the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven by a risen and ascended Head to unite us to Him;

for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body
{1 Cor. 12:13}.

We are then fitted, so to speak, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ devotedly, steadfastly, unceasingly, and without any hesitation. Hence we have the exhortation,

Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord {1 Cor. 15:58}.

It is thus that we are to wait for His return from heaven. To expect any clue by signs or dates, or times or seasons, as to when the Lord Jesus Christ is coming *for us*, would be without the authority of Scripture, and contrary to the true character of the position in which we are set by the grace of God as partakers of the heavenly calling. True works of faithfulness to Christ, of real affection for Christ, of care for the truth of Christ, holding fast His name, obedience to His word, waiting and longing ardently, and yet patiently, for His return from heaven, should characterize all Christians.

With regard to the expressions at the close of the Revelation,

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:7}!

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:12}!

and the last words,

Surely I come quickly {Rev. 22:20}!

let us remember that they were given to the Churches nearly eighteen hundred years ago; so that it is clear that the coming of the Lord must be eighteen hundred years nearer now than it was then. There may be some here to-night who have a difficulty on this point, because of another text which is found in the tenth chapter of Hebrews, which says,

Exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching {Heb. 10:25}.

This verse has often been misused. Some have taken it as if it meant that the day of the Lord was the Christian's hope; as if they were called to wait for the *day of the Lord*, instead of for the *Son from heaven* to meet us in the air. As I have said, there is an immense difference between these two things. God's earthly people Israel were clearly taught to look for the day of the Lord; and there is something which is of the earth earthy, and intellectual, and we may also say political, in waiting for a particular day that is to come upon the earth; but those who are declared to be not of the world, who are called with a heavenly calling, and united to Christ in the heavenlies, *they* are called to wait, not for events coming upon the earth, but, as I have sought to prove from Scripture, for God's Son from heaven. But whilst thus waiting for Him, as having the Holy Ghost, having the Scriptures, and spiritual intelligence, as the apostle says,

the mind of Christ {1 Cor. 2:16},

we cannot but observe in the various events that are taking place, especially in this most interesting part of the prophetic world in which we live -- I mean the ten kingdoms of the Roman Empire -- we cannot but observe that the platform, so to speak, is already being prepared for the approaching day. We see that the time cannot be, humanly speaking, far distant when the Lord Jesus will come and take us away, and then He will begin to deal in judgment with the world, and especially this part of it in which we live. It would, therefore, be quite consistent for a believer to be waiting for God's Son from heaven to come at any time -- morning, noon, or night -- on any day, and yet to be observing with spiritual intelligence, according to God's word, what is going on round about; particularly what of late years has occurred on the continent, and is still going on, showing that the ten kingdoms of the Roman empire are being gradually developed, according to the prophecy of Daniel's second chapter. But I repeat that, while we

see the day approaching {Heb. 10:25},

it must never be forgotten that the day is not our hope -- it is a Jewish hope; but our proximate hope is the coming of the Lord Himself from heaven, and then, of course, all the glories that will follow. This, I say, a Jew was never taught in the Old Testament, nor can I find such an idea there, as a believer being taught to wait for God's Son from heaven to come and take him unto Himself -- to meet Him in the air. The day of the Lord, when His saints come *with* Him, is another thing. This second coming of God's Son to them that look for Him is a distinct hope -- a special hope given to those who are in Christ, partakers of the heavenly calling, born again of God's Spirit, and joined to the Lord, one spirit with Him.

That the Lord will come before the millennium is very clear.

1st. Because the restitution of all things mentioned in Acts 3 is connected with God sending Jesus.

2ndly. The Jews, as a nation, will come into their blessing by seeing Jesus. The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob.

3rdly. According to the eighth chapter of Romans, creation will not be delivered from its present bondage of corruption till the sons of God are manifested; and they will not be manifested till Christ comes.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory {see Col. 3:4}.

4thly. The world will go on as it did in the days of Noe; and as they did not *know* till the flood came, so will it be when the Son of man cometh, proving that the world cannot have its promised universal blessing till Christ is manifested in glory.

With regard to the hope, allow me to say that it is one thing to have the knowledge from Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again; it is another thing to have the hope of His coming in the soul. It never says in Scripture, he that has the knowledge of prophecy shall purify himself; but it is said, he

that hath this hope in Him (in Christ) purifieth himself {1 John 3:3}.

In watching the Lord's work in Christians for many years, I have been struck with two distinct phases of character, if I may so speak, in those who have received the doctrine of the Lord's second coming. The one is what I would term a *spiritual* phase; the other is an *intellectual* or *political* phase. You will easily perceive that what is merely intellectual has no real power over the heart, because Christ Himself is not the object, but prophetic events are made the object. Some find it an amusing study. I have met with people who could go from Genesis to Revelation, and tell me a great deal more than I know of prophecy, and I have sometimes said that such and such a person has begun at the wrong end. He has begun with prophetic facts, instead of beginning with Christ. Now if any of you, dear people, are taken up with prophecy and prophetic events, I would have you reflect on what I have said. Men in the flesh can be taken up with the history of the Jews, the millennial age, and past, present, or future events; but a spiritual mind starts with Christ, surveys everything in relation to Christ, keeps close to Christ, sees nothing interesting except in relation to Christ, looks up to Christ; he cannot be happy anywhere where Christ is not, but he can live everywhere where Christ is. He sees nothing good apart from Christ. His heart's desire is --

"None but Christ to me be given;
None but Christ on earth or heaven."

I would not give much for prophetic intelligence, if it does not begin, continue, and end in connection with the person, work, and glory of Christ. Therefore it is that the hope is so prominent in Scripture, for it is the hope in the soul that is so eminently practical. It is that which Christ loves. What would you think of a bridegroom writing tenderly and affectionately to the one espoused to him, and saying, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself," and that she manifested very great indifference about it? Any one would say that she did not care much for her lover. Above all things, beloved friends, let us be sure that our hearts respond to the love of Christ, that our affections are true to Him, that Christ is the one object of our souls, and that it is He

who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, that we now live to please and wait for. And you, dear young Christians, be sure that you keep on the true ground of peace -- abiding peace between your souls and God; and knowing that it is for ever settled, take your place up there in communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, and see everything from that stand-point. Do not look at the church or Israel, apart from Christ. Do not look at the millennial world, or anything else prophetic, apart from Christ. Christ is your life, and He is your hope.

I will come again {John 14:3},

He said. If you and I were to be caught up into the heavens at once, and did not see Jesus, should we be satisfied? There is no real child of God who would. There are no persons in this assembly, old or young, who really believe on Christ for salvation, who will ever be fully satisfied till they see Christ. It is seeing Him, and having to do with Him, that can alone fully satisfy a regenerated heart. Therefore I do not come here with doctrine merely for you to receive, or with a number of prophetic events for you to look into, note down, and treasure up in your minds. My object is to seek, if possible, that your dear souls may learn more of Christ, be more attracted to Him, be more able to walk in His ways, and live more for His glory. If ten thousand people in this town were to receive a simple statement of prophetic events, however correct, and that only, I should be disheartened and distressed; but if I find as a result of these lectures, that some have been more attracted to the Lord Himself, have become more filled with the love of Christ, more separated from things of time and this present evil age, by being more taken up with the person of Christ, that would indeed be an abundant recompence for any number of lectures on His second coming.

I now turn to the practical aspect of this great doctrine of Scripture, -- the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints. And, in the first place, let me notice that it is called in Scripture a *blessed hope* {Titus 2:13}.

Oh, what a word that is -- "blessed!" It will be to us connected with nothing but blessing. It will be fulness of joy and pleasure for evermore. You will then never shed another tear. You will never have another sorrow. You will be so richly and fully blessed, that you will never know the end of your blessings. You never will be able to calculate that eternal weight of glory, that joy unspeakable, that perfect rest, or that ceaseless and uninterrupted delight which you will have when you first gaze upon the face of your precious Jesus, and begin to raise the eternal anthem,

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain {Rev. 5:12}!

It is also a *soul-stirring hope*. It is a truth for the affections. Consider the reality of bridegroom and bride. Can anything more thoroughly stir the emotions of a true heart? I ask, what faithful, loving, chaste bride would not be delighted with her lover's promise, "I am quickly coming for you"? What would move the affections, what would stir the deepest feelings of the heart, like the testimony from himself, that "in a little while I am coming for you"? Again, in reference to the preaching of the gospel, can we conceive anything more stirring? Can anything more powerfully urge the faithful Christian to testify the grace of God to poor sinners, than the knowledge of the fact that the Master is quickly coming for the saints, and that then the ungodly will be left behind

for judgment? I cannot imagine anything either that will constrain us to real faithfulness to the Lord, and care for His saints, His truth, His glory, like the Master's voice --

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:7, 12}!

Do we know this hope to be so soul-stirring? Are we so living and walking as to be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless? Would the Master, if He came to-night, say to you and me,

Well done, good and faithful servants {see Matt. 25:23}?

It is set before us in Scripture as a *comforting hope*:

Therefore comfort one another with these words {see 1 Thess. 4:18}.

How many a child of God may be now in this Hall who has had a dear parent, dear children, a darling wife, or a long and fondly-loved husband, who have died in the Lord? The heart has been made to feel very sorrowful by the separation; but the testimony of the scriptures is, that the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, and then the dead in Christ shall rise, and we who remain shall be changed; and then all go up together into the air to meet Him: and so shall we be for ever with the Lord.

Wherefore *comfort one another* with these words.

And surely those who have gone before are waiting with patience for the coming of the Lord. Let us not have wrong thoughts with regard to those who have died in the Lord; for though they are absent from the body and present with the Lord, yet their bodies are in the grave. That they are with the Lord, and in the enjoyment of full felicity and happiness as far as they are capable, there can be no doubt; but they are waiting for the coming of the Lord, when they will know the redemption of their bodies too, and then be capable of receiving and enjoying the full measure of their promised blessings. I remember some time ago hearing that a number of, I hope, servants of Christ, felt it their duty to preach against this important truth. My comfort is this, that directly they fall asleep in Jesus they will know its reality; for they will immediately begin to wait for the Lord. Christ is expecting to come; and those who have fallen asleep in Him are waiting for the Lord to come, that their bodies and spirits may be united, and then we shall all meet, and be for ever like the Lord, and with the Lord.

It is also plainly set before us in Scripture as a *purifying hope*. The apostle John says,

He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure {see 1 John 3:3}.

It is impossible that we can be really hoping for the Lord's return from heaven and be walking carelessly. Our great adversary often cheats us, or we cheat ourselves, by putting knowledge in the room of faith and hope. Many persons have a great deal of knowledge of the letter; but that is very different from the power of truth in the heart. Therefore it is said,

He that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself.

If looking for Christ, we cannot be associating ourselves with what we know He will disapprove. We cannot be upholding now what we know we should be ashamed of then. Those who have not yet thought of the coming of the Lord as a great practical truth will

do well to consider that Scripture. It is found in the third chapter of the first epistle of John:

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure {1 John 3:2, 3}.

Such a believer lives in this hope like a man separated unto God. We do not know when He is coming, but we are to wait and hope for Him. It is possible that the Lord Jesus Christ may come to-night. I do not say He will; to say so would not be according to Scripture. But I say He *may* come; and if we are looking for Him, we cannot be occupied with what we know would be hateful in His sight. We may be very ignorant, but we cannot walk in disobedience, and at the same time be saying,

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly {see Rev. 22:20}!

Therefore it is that

he that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.

Again, it is a *rejoicing hope*. What can give a Christian such joy as the hope of seeing and being with Christ Himself? But you say, "I hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming, and I have not this joy." That is what I have been saying. Knowing the Scripture about it is one thing, but believing it to be God's revealed truth to you as the present hope of your soul is another. If you believe it to be God's revealed truth that you are delivered from the wrath to come, that your sins have been blotted out, that your old man has been put to death on the cross, that you have received life in a risen Christ, and that He is quickly coming from heaven for you, -- if it be to you a blessed hope, surely it is calculated to fill the heart with the deepest, purest joy. If that does not give the heart joy, nothing will. I grant that the *foundation* of all joy is the accomplished redemption of Christ; but the *crowning* joy is the hope of seeing Him. We shall, through wondrous mercy, have a crown and a robe; but what are the robe and the crown compared with Him? They are not Christ; and it is a precious reality that,

"Greater far than all besides,
He, He Himself is thine."

When Paul thought of his service in the gospel, his joy was that the Lord was coming. It is said in the second chapter of the first epistle to the Thessalonians,

What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? *Are not even ye* in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ *at His coming*? {1 Thess. 2:19}.

Thus Paul, who was persecuted, sometimes almost stoned to death, rejected, in poverty, and imprisonment, says, {in other words} "I am looking with joy for the coming of the Lord; for then I shall know, and have the joy of, the results of my labours in the gospel." Again, if we for a moment consider that even now, knowing Him by faith whom we have never seen, we so love and rejoice in Him as to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, what must it be to see Him? What must it be to have His smile continually before our eyes? What must it be to be always in the atmosphere of His changeless, personal, perfect love? What must it be to have the delight of our hearts always before us? What must it be to see Him in all His glory? As I have said, He Himself looks forward to it; He said,

Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory {John 17:24}.

Is not this the highest blessing that Scripture puts before us? --

They shall see His face {Rev. 22:4}!

I do not believe there is anything of a higher quality than that; for whatever blessings we may have before, whatever happiness we may then know, or whatever joy surrounding us, there would still be something wanting if we did not, could not, *see* Jesus. But surely we shall be satisfied when we awake with His likeness, gazing on His face; and, blessed be His name, He will be satisfied too; for He will then

see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied {Isa. 53:11}.

But there are two more points to which I must briefly refer in connection with this hope. It is what the Scripture teaches concerning *eternal union* and *eternal separation*. How very solemn! This blessed hope is associated with the most uniting idea in Scripture. In this present life we see the Lord's dear children separated, rent asunder, and torn, often manifesting little interest, little sympathy, seldom perhaps giving themselves to prayer for one another. There is now little putting of arms round each other's necks, little embracing of one another, little of the tender-heartedness which characterized the saints of old. But all this will be changed at the Lord's coming. All those who are Christ's, however separated now, will be then drawn together to meet the Lord in the air. Then we shall live as we ought to live, and love as we ought to love. Whatever we now do imperfectly, we shall then do well pleasing in His sight. However ignorant now, we shall know even as we are known then. We shall be perfectly joined together. How blessed! But connected with this truth of saints being united, there is also a most alarming certainty of *separation* in relation to the coming of the Lord Jesus. Those who are caught up and brought into the sphere of eternal blessing are limited to those who are Christ's. The Scripture is very decisive. It does not include all those who are religious; it does not say those who have been baptized; it does not say those who have been regular in going to church or chapel; no, it does not say any such thing. It says,

they that are Christ's at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23},

whoever or wherever they may be. Many who may hold high offices here, and be considered most religious and devout people, if they be not Christ's, their nakedness will be made manifest, their foul state will be laid bare, every mask will be removed, and it will be made known that he who was not with Christ has been really against Him. It will then be found, perhaps, that there were no such enemies of Christ as mere empty professors. We sometimes feel as if drawing near to the close of working on earth; but of all things our earnest desire is, that God would keep us from making mere professors, sowing tares; for it is most distinctly the work of Satan. I know there are many who think that they ought to make people tares first, and that they will then more easily be turned into wheat. I cannot see that in Scripture; I see that sowing tares is there declared to be the work of the wicked one. What we should desire to live for is, that Christ may be magnified, His saints blessed, and souls brought to the Savior, that He may be glorified. Therefore, if there be a person here who has not received the Lord Jesus as his Savior, I beseech him, before he leaves this room, to bow down to Jesus the Son of God, and take

Him as his Savior and his Master. These are the true marks of a real Christian -- he owns Christ as his Savior, and also as his Master.

Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? {Acts 9:6}

is the language of the soul that has received Christ as his Savior. Therefore, as the time must come when you will be either for ever with Christ, or for ever banished from His presence, I pray you listen to this truth. When Jesus comes, as I have said, it will be connected with either eternal union in glory, or eternal separation. In that moment the wife who believes will be for ever taken from the husband who believes not, or the believing husband from the unbelieving wife. I entreat you now, while it is the accepted time and the day of salvation, to solemnly think of these things in the presence of God. I earnestly beseech you, as poor, lost, guilty, perishing sinners, who can do nothing in the flesh to please God, who have a nature that is not subject to God, and never can be, -- I entreat you to come just as you are to the blessed Lord Jesus Christ, -- that blessed, risen Savior up in the glory, who still says,

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37}.

But oh, if you still reject Him, remember, if He comes to-night, you will be left behind to perish with the wicked. I entreat you, while God is preaching peace by Jesus Christ, that you refuse not, that you turn not away from this blessed sinner-loving Jesus at God's right hand, who delighteth in mercy, who is able to save to the uttermost, and who still says,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

May God bless you, dear friends, so that you may escape the coming wrath, and not be among that unhappy number who will knock when it is too late; who will believe only after the door is shut; and who will hear the Lord's voice filling them with unutterable anguish and despair, saying,

Depart from me;

I never knew you {Matt. 7:23}.

Those of you who are in Christ, who love and honor His dear name, but who have not hitherto been looking for His coming, may the light of God's revealed truth so shine into your souls, that you may begin from this moment to cry,

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20};

because He says,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3}.

I say again, begin this night to give to Him the becoming response to that precious promise --

Even so, come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

Lecture 3: The Church of God, and Her Coming Glory

The church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God (1 Cor. 10:32).

And hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:22, 23).

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God (Rev. 21:9, 10).

Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

In a day like this, beloved friends, when Ritualism, Rationalism, and Churchism are so prominent, it is exceedingly gracious of God to give to His faithful ones clear light from His own word as to the true character of the Church of God. To the Christian its importance cannot be overrated; for as God is in this dispensation forming and building up the Church, the body of Christ, if the soul be not in communion with Him about that Church, which Christ loved and purchased with His own blood, and which will ere long be presented to Himself a glorious Church, -- I say, if the Christian be not in communion with God about that, how can he have clear light on other parts of the truth, which are put before us either in contrast or in connection with it?

The Church of God is an entirely new thing. And when I say "new," I mean new as in contrast with all the former dispensations. Before the death and resurrection of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, there were only two classes of persons found in the world -- Jews and Gentiles. But since the Holy Ghost came down, consequent upon the blood-shedding and glorification of Christ in the heavens, we have three things presented to us as co-existing in the world; therefore I read that Scripture in confirmation of it --

Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God (1 Cor. 10:32).

There are these three classes then in the world at this present moment -- Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God.

Let me also say, beloved friends, that the Church of God is not revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. Do not be startled at this announcement, I beseech you, because if you follow me patiently, I trust you will see that the Scriptures fully warrant the statement. I do not say that we do not get in the Old Testament symbols of the Church; I am sure we do. Adam and Eve were symbolical of Christ and the Church. But what I said was, that we get no distinct revelation in the Old Testament Scriptures of the Church of God. In fact, if we had only the Old Testament Scriptures, we should not have had an idea that there was such a thing as the Church of God. I am, however, prepared for

objections to this; and will now try to meet such as seem to me worth considering.

Some people say that the prophet Isaiah is full of the Church of God, and that most of the Old Testament prophets have written many beautiful descriptions of the Church of God. But in order to give a shadow of a proof of this they interpret "Jerusalem" to be the Church, the "house of David" to be the Church, "Zion" to be the Church, and I don't know what else to be the Church, without, as far as I can see, any authority whatever for so doing. But you will find, with regard to the prophet Isaiah, that the book is headed with these words:

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem {Isa. 1:1}.

And therefore, whilst the Holy Ghost, in writing the Scriptures, might underlie and interlace most precious truths which we can now take up and use for our edification, yet it is clear that the plain instruction of these Scriptures has reference to the nation and people of Israel, and not to the Church of God.

To those who may feel a little surprised at my questioning the right or wisdom of what they call spiritualising the Old Testament Scriptures, or at my raising a question whether the words "Jerusalem," "house of David," "Zion," &c., mean the Church, I would say, consider with me two Scriptures. One in Micah, third chapter and twelfth verse:

Zion shall be ploughed like a field (Mic. 3:12).

Now is that the Church? To say such a thing would be an absurdity; for we know as a fact that it has had its literal accomplishment for many years, as travellers have frequently seen. In the second psalm we find the other Scripture to which I refer:

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion {Psa. 2:6}.

Where is that? Can it possibly be any other than the literal mount Zion, where God's King by-and-by will actually reign? Surely Christ is not King in relation to the Church. Do not for a moment suppose that Christ is reigning over the Church like a king reigns

over his subjects. No, my beloved friends, as I tried to show you lately, the believer is one with Christ ascended -- a joint-heir with Christ; and whatever Christ will inherit believers will share with Him as His joint-heirs. Yes, blessed be God, we shall share with Him the honor, glory, dignity, and wealth of the inheritance to which He is entitled as heir of all things. This is a very different thing from being reigned over; and these two Scriptures ought to be enough to show the unwarrantableness of asserting that Zion means the Church.

The second objection perhaps that would be brought to the statement, that the Church of God was not revealed in the last dispensation, would be a passage mentioned in the seventh chapter of the Acts. In the thirty-eighth verse we find the words,

This is He that was with the Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38).

Now there we see at once an apparent difficulty, because it seems to assert that the Church was known in a former dispensation; but there is no reality in it, when you consider the thing fairly. The same word that is here translated "church" is twice translated in the nineteenth chapter "assembly." In the thirty-ninth verse of that chapter we find,

It shall be determined in a lawful *assembly* (Acts 19:39); that is, in one of the ordinary courts of law at Ephesus. And in the forty-first verse,

He dismissed the *assembly* (Acts 19:41).

That is, He dismissed the crowd that made the uproar. Precisely the same word is here translated "assembly" as we find translated "church" in the seventh chapter. But further, consider for a moment what the assembly was in the wilderness. Was it not so rebellious, sinful, and unfaithful that not one of that immense congregation except Joshua and Caleb entered the land? Could we then gravely think of that being the Church? Let me be clear on this point. The word for "assembly" is also translated "church" in the New Testament; but why I read the verse from the first chapter of the Ephesians was to show that the assembly which we call the Church of God is there defined to be the body of Christ --

the fulness of Him that filleth all in all {Eph. 1:23}.

Again, those who are acquainted with the book of the prophet Isaiah will remember that there is a passage which has been used by very many as supposed to refer to the Church of God. It is in the nineteenth verse of the twenty-sixth chapter:

Thy dead *men* shall live, *together with* my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead (Isa. 26:19).

I have read the passage with the italics, which, as every body knows, are not in the original. These words were put in with the best intentions by the translators, in order, as they thought, to give the passage a better sense; but, omitting the italics, the verse reads,

Thy dead men shall live, my dead body (or my carcase) shall they arise.

The simple meaning of it is, that the Jewish people will by-and-by be brought out of the state of dust and death in which they now are. If you read it in connection with the whole chapter, you will

not find the slightest difficulty with the passage. The plain and obvious meaning is, that Israel, in a dead state, likened to a dead body or carcase, shall, by-and-by, at the times of restitution of all things, be brought into the wondrous blessing predicted by the prophets. This must, however, be preceded by judgment; hence, in the last verses, the people are instructed to hide themselves until the inhabitants of the earth are punished for their iniquity.

In the 139th Psalm there is another passage which has often been brought forward in proof of giving us a plain revelation as to the Church of God. In the 14th verse it is written,

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was *made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth*. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them (Psa. 139:14-16).

Omit the italics from this passage, and you will see, in reading these verses in connection, that the subject spoken of is the creation of the natural body; though from the knowledge we now have, we can easily see that it may also have a figurative application.

These are the chief objections, as far as I am aware, that intelligent persons would raise to the statement I have made, that we do not find the Church of God revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. And in the New Testament we have the plainest possible intimation that it was not so revealed. For instance, in the third chapter to the Ephesians, it is written --

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel {Eph. 3:1-6}.

Here we get the distinct statement that "the mystery" was revealed to Paul the apostle, and that it had not been made known to others

as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets {Eph. 3:5}.

And particularly observe one thing here. The order is always "apostles and prophets," not "prophets and apostles." In the second chapter the Church is spoken of as

built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets {Eph. 2:20}.

And so, with regard to gifts,

He gave some apostles, and some prophets {Eph. 4:11},

to show that the prophets of the New Testament are referred to, and not the Old Testament prophets. If it had been the latter, the order would have been prophets and apostles; but, as I have said, it is always the reverse -- "apostles and prophets." Hence we have

as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets.

But the difficulty might be raised, that it was partially revealed to the Old Testament saints, although it was not then fully brought out as it was to Paul. But if we go a little further down this third chapter to the Ephesians, we find in the 9th verse,

And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the *beginning of the world hath been hid in God* {Eph. 3:9}.

Mark that expression, “hid in God.” It does not even say, “hid in the Scriptures”; but declares that the mystery of the Church, the body of Christ, was not revealed, but “hid in God.” And in the sixteenth chapter to the Romans we are told that

the revelation of the mystery was kept secret since the world began {see Rom. 16:25}.

So that the Church of God is a new and special revelation -- a thing that was not known until it was revealed to

His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit {Eph. 3:5}.

There is another thing which we ought now to enter into a little; viz., that the Church had no existence (save in God’s purpose) until after the death and resurrection of Christ. The first mention, I believe, that we have of the Church in Scripture is in the 16th chapter of the gospel by Matthew. Christ had been virtually rejected by the nation of Israel. In the 12th chapter they went about to destroy Him; and in the beginning of the 16th chapter he speaks of them as an adulterous generation. Further on, in reply to Peter’s confession of Him as the Christ the Son of the living God, Jesus said,

Upon this rock I *will* build my Church {Matt. 16:18}.

This is the first time the Church is mentioned. It did not come out until after Christ had been rejected by Israel; and if you read the 21st verse, you will find,

From that time forth {Matt. 16:21},

Jesus began to speak of His sufferings, death, and resurrection. The distinction is most beautiful, because prior to that, at least to the end of the 12th chapter, the testimony of John the forerunner of Christ, and the testimony of Christ Himself, was to the kingdom. John’s ministry was

repent

-- *not, for the Church* is at hand, but

the *kingdom of heaven* is at hand {Matt. 3:2}.

And when John was put into prison, Christ came forth and took up the same ministry Himself, uttering the same words,

Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand {Matt. 4:17}.

In the tenth chapter He sends out His twelve disciples to preach that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. The result was, that this testimony met with almost universal rejection; so that instead of welcoming the Messiah to set up the kingdom, they actually went about to destroy Him. Then, when Peter confesses,

Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God {Matt. 16:16},

Jesus says,

Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona {Matt. 16:17}.

He tells Peter he is a blessed man; and added, that He purposed to build His Church. Now, can anything be clearer than that the Church was then a prospective thing; it was not then in existence. It was His intention to build it. Therefore, at that time, it was a

thing in the future. You will also find in the first chapter of the Acts, after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, He says,

Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence {Acts 1:5}.

And we see that actually fulfilled in the second chapter, when the Holy Ghost came down. In the fifth verse of the first chapter of the Acts we read of Jesus saying to His disciples, (those very people on whom He had breathed, and said,

Receive ye the Holy Ghost) {John 20:22},

Ye shall be *baptized with the Holy Ghost* not many days hence {Acts 1:5}.

Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost came down. For what? He came down and sat upon each of those believers, so that they were all *filled with the Holy Ghost* {Acts 2:3}. But you may say, “What has that to do with the formation of the Church of God?” It has everything to do with it. That was the time when the Church of God began to be formed upon the earth. Therefore, at the end of the chapter, we read that

the Lord added

-- to what? To the nation of Israel? No. To the disciples? No. What then?

The Lord added to *the Church* daily such as should be saved {Acts 2:47}.

In confirmation of this, turn to the 12th chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, and you will find in the 13th verse,

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13).

No doubt there had always been believers, with more or less distinctness of apprehension of the coming Redeemer, from Adam downwards. Adam evidently had faith in the Redeemer, as well as Abel, Enoch, and a host of others. They were justified by the blood of the promised sacrifice. They had life and righteousness, and they will be everlastingly blessed. But they were always individuals -- “just men” {Heb. 11:23}; they were always units. But since the Holy Ghost came down, there is no such thing as being merely an individual Christian. The Spirit has formed a unity, and enjoins us to keep it. In saying this I am not setting aside individual responsibility, because I know that exists; but what God is building now on the earth is a body, a corporation, so to speak, of believers in a crucified, risen, and ascended Savior, who are actually in God’s sight baptized by the Holy Ghost into

one body {1 Cor. 12:13},

in union with Christ, the ascended Head in heaven. Therefore, I trust, we can enter a little into the meaning of these words in the first of Ephesians:

The Church, which is His body {Eph. 1:22, 23}.

And let me say, beloved friends, that I cannot conceive any calling higher, any dignity greater; or a more blessed or more gracious way in which God could deal with His creatures, than in thus bringing each believer into direct union with the risen Son of His love in heaven, and in union with one another, by one indwelling Holy Spirit. Some years ago there was a clerical meeting in the town in which I was residing. A Christian passing through the street was attracted, like many others, with the sight of a number of clergymen going into the hotel. Whilst there, he

found himself standing beside a Jew, who resided in the town. This Jew turned to the Christian and said, "I was just thinking what a miserable imitation this is of our glorious vestments and temple. Instead of these vestments, oh, think of the garments of glory and beauty! and instead of that building, think of our glorious temple! What a miserable imitation this is of our religion." The Christian turned to the Jew, and said, "I entirely agree with you. I am not there at all. I readily accord you all the blessings of earth, and all the blessings of earthly religion, earthly grandeur, vestments, ordinances, and temple; they are yours. I am not there at all. I am up there" (pointing to the heavens). He then inquired of the Jew where he resided? The Jew kindly informed him. "I will call and see you, if you will allow me, in a few days," said he; and they parted. He called on this Jew, and was kindly received; for I suppose the Jew was astonished to find any Christian who was willing to accord to his people all their privileges, and all the grandeur of their religion. The Christian took a Testament out of his pocket, and having read to the Jew the first few verses of the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians, he said, "I am not where you are at all; I am in Christ in the heavens; I am blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Him. Christ is my life. Christ is my righteousness. I have redemption through His blood. I am united to Him, and all believers are united together in Him, by one Spirit, and baptized into one body." Now, what do you think this intelligent Jew said to that? His answer was something like this. "Of course, I don't believe it; but if that were true, it would be the finest emanation from God that could possibly be conceived." But, beloved friends, we know that it is true; and the lost and sin-stricken soul who has received Christ as his Savior, and bows to the revealed truth of God, gladly rejoices in these wondrous blessings. It is quite true that Christians have slipped away from the enjoyment of this place of blessing into which God has put them; yet, thank God, the fact has not altered through our failure. We are not only in Christ, who is seated in the heavens, but we belong to Christ here, we are united to Him by the Holy Ghost as members of His body; so that He can speak of us in the fifth of Ephesians as

members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones
{Eph. 5:30}.

And most blessed is it to see that the death of Christ is the foundation and security of these marvelous blessings. He died that He

should gather together *in one* the children of God that *were* scattered abroad {John 11:52}.

Bear with me, beloved friends, in this digression. I will now proceed with the consideration of the point, that the Church of the living God -- the body of Christ -- had no existence until after the death of Jesus. How could it, if Christ was not Head till He ascended? but if we turn to Eph. 2 we shall find a text that, to my mind, settles the matter. In the fifteenth verse it is written,

Having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace (Eph. 2:15).

This shows that Christ did something "in His flesh," which completely settled every question as to the law of commandments in ordinances. This He did by His death on the cross -- by bearing the curse of the law. He took it out of the way, having abolished

it in His flesh. For what was it taken out of the way? Why was Christ to satisfy every requirement of the law, and to be nailed to the cross, and made a curse for it? As it is written,

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us {Gal. 3:13}.

Why was that? To bring in a better thing. That is, Christ died to take away one thing and to bring in another. The second then could not be formed till the first was abolished. We have seen what was abolished. The question now is, What was this that was formed? We are told,

one new man;

in other words, the Church of God. You see that it is the figure of a body that is used here. For Christ is the head, and believers are the members. The head and members form the man. Therefore Christ and His members are this "one new man," formed or created in Himself. It is made up of believing Jews and believing Gentiles, thus of the twain, united by one Spirit in Christ as Head, we have this new workmanship of God -- "one new man."

Nothing, I think, can be more conclusive than that the Church of God has this new, special, and unique character. It may be well to notice what is said, or rather what is omitted, in the book of Daniel, as to the Church not having been revealed till Paul's day, or not in existence on earth till the descent of the Holy Ghost. Where prophetic truth is recorded, according as the angel gave Daniel concerning the nation of Israel, there is a niche in which this might have come in, if it had been the mind of God to have revealed it then. But it was not. And therefore concerning this niche, which in point of time has already occupied well nigh two thousand years, Daniel is perfectly silent. What Daniel prophesied about was his own people; but his people -- the nation of Israel -- is one thing; and the Church of God, united to the living Head in heaven, is another. In this famous prophecy of seventy weeks, as recorded in the ninth chapter, we find that the particulars are unbroken until the sixty-ninth week, when the Messiah was

cut off {Dan. 9:26}.

It takes us uninterruptedly down to the death of Christ. Ever since the death of Christ the gap has continued. You would not suppose from that prophecy that there was any thing like the Church of God to come in between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. The instruction being about the nation of Israel who rejected the Messiah, this present time is entirely unnoticed; and he goes on to the seventieth week, as if it would have immediately followed the death of the Messiah. This period has been occupied with the calling out of the Church of God; for the seventieth week has not yet begun; so that until the Church is completed and taken away, the last week of this prophecy will not begin to have its accomplishment.

I have thus sought to establish from Scripture that the Church of God is a new thing, "one body," and peculiar to this dispensation; that it began to be formed on earth by the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, who baptized believers, and still baptizes them, into one body. This, I repeat, is going on, and will continue to go on, till every member is united to the Head, and the body fully formed. As far as we know the body may now be well nigh completed. When it is completed, the Lord will come from heaven for us; and when the Church is removed, He will deal

again with Jews and Gentiles as such. This subject is immensely important, as giving us a knowledge of what God is about now, and fellowship with Him by the Spirit in it. How impossible it is for a believer to understand according to God's mind what is going on in the present day, if he has not this key which God in His great love has given! But not only is the subject important as giving us intelligence concerning God's present ways, but it influences immensely the practical ways of Christians in testimony for the Lord, in conduct to one another, and in service to Christ. Satan has certainly wrought a most impoverishing work amongst Christians, in robbing them of the plain Scripture teaching of the peculiar calling, characteristics, and hope of the Church of God as distinct from Gentiles and Jews. It is evident that what Satan is about, and what many Christians are connected with and helping on, to their great loss and the Lord's dishonor, is a mixture of heathenism, Judaism, and Christianity.

Bear with me, beloved friends. Look at the ecclesiastical architecture of the day. What is it? Is it not often an imitation of heathen temples that were once of such magnificence and grandeur in eastern parts? And if you search into a good deal of the religiousness round about us, (I speak with the greatest respect and love for every Christian; it is the system only that I speak against,) you will find that it is more or less connected with what is legal and Jewish, but, of course, blended with some truths of Christianity. But you cannot be connected with a mixture of this kind without terrible damage and loss. If you are a true believer in Christ, you are not now a Gentile nor a Jew. Being united to a risen Christ, you have lost your Gentile standing or Jewish standing; for you are in Him. You are formed by Him into a new thing. You belong to the "one new man" -- the body of Christ -- the Church of God; and I believe it will be a most profitable time for that Christian to-night who may see for the first time that there are three things at this moment in the world, -- Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God. And there are these three things in this town. There are Jews here. All those who are not Jews are Gentiles, if they are in their sins; and those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation, whether before Jews or Gentiles, are united to Christ, and because they are united to Christ they belong to the Church of God. Some thoughts current about the Church are very erroneous. Man says, "You must belong to our Church if you would belong to Christ." Never was anything more thoroughly untrue. Scripture teaches that you cannot belong to the Church of God unless by union with Christ. No ordinance, be it baptism or anything else, will give you a place in the Church of God.

By one Spirit [that is, by the Holy Ghost] are we all baptized into one body {1 Cor. 12:13}.

It is of the greatest importance that every child of God should see what he belongs to, what he is delivered from, where he is brought, and what God says of him. He should not be satisfied merely with knowing that he is a true believer. For instance, in the epistle to the Colossians Paul did not doubt that they were believers. He thanked God for their faith in Christ Jesus, and for the love which they had to all saints. He was thankful also that they were walking orderly, and were steadfast in the faith. But, in the beginning of the second chapter, he tells us that he was in great conflict, or rather in great agony, for those dear saints. He says he rejoiced at their faith, and love, and godliness in *some* respects,

and yet he had this agony. Why was it that he was so distressed for them? He tells us

that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God {Col. 2:2}.

That is, he could not rest till their souls were established in the truth of the Church the body of Christ, *the practical acknowledgment of the mystery*. The mystery is defined in the sixth verse of the third chapter of Ephesians,

that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3:6).

As we have seen, at the conclusion of the second chapter of the Acts, there was a body formed on the day of Pentecost; but they were Jews. After God's testimony by the apostles and by Stephen had been rejected, the mystery was revealed to Paul. The Lord came down from heaven to him, and said,

Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? {Acts 9:4}.

That is to say, "Why persecutest thou the members of my body?" There was the revelation of the mystery -- part of it at all events. Suppose a person takes a stick, and gives you a heavy blow on your arm or leg, you do not say, Why do you beat my arm or leg? but Why do you beat *me*? So believers in Christ are His body, and the Lord said to Saul,

Why persecutest thou *me*?

As believers therefore form the body of Christ, we can see why Paul was anxious that the Colossians should not come short of the blessed truth; for he knew there would be no knitting together of heart, no acting together according to the Lord's mind, unless they knew this blessed truth of being one body, and indwelt by one Spirit. Here, I believe, we have the true secret of forming the Christian character, moulding the affections, ministering to the heart, guiding the life, and stirring the devotedness and service of the children of God. And I believe that no Christian will fully walk for the glory of God, who is ignorant of what His mind is concerning the Church. How can he? Who does not feel his inmost soul moved within him when he knows that he is a member of the body of Christ, formed by the Holy Ghost, and thus united to that blessed living Head who is glorified in the heavens? Nor should it be overlooked, that the apostle traces the errors with which they were associated to their

not holding the Head {Col. 2:19}.

It was not that they did not hold Christ as Savior and Lord, but they were not in their souls on the ground of the one body, which is united to Christ in the heavens. They were not holding the Head. This is a most important point, as the second of Colossians clearly shows; and perhaps no truth is more needed in the present day. The glories of Him in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily -- the Head of the body the Church; and consequently our relationship to Him, and to one another, and separation from the world, clearly apprehended in the soul, will keep us from a thousand errors, and guide our feet in ways according to our Lord's mind. If we are really holding the Head, every member of that body must be an object of interest, affection, and prayer; and what is due to Christ will not be overlooked.

Let me ask you to consider another question: How did Paul treat the disorders at Corinth? You know in what a sad state the Corinthian assembly was. One of the remedies, at all events, was to instruct them in this truth. He writes to them, as we have it in the twelfth and fourteenth chapters of his first epistle, that he would not have them ignorant concerning spiritual gifts, and the one body, and how they were to act toward each other as members of the same body, and how to behave themselves in the assembly, especially in relation to the Holy Ghost and the exercise of gifts. He would have them understand for their practical conduct these things. He says:

Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular {1 Cor. 12:27}.

There are weighty obligations to Christ in connection with these truths. On these obligations much might be said, were there not other things to occupy our attention now. Suffice it to say, that our place as members of the body of Christ is to hold Him the Head -- not only as Savior, but as Head of the body; to be faithful to Him who is our Lord; to be subject to Him as the wife is subject to the husband; to honor Christ; to serve Christ; to show forth the characteristics of Christ. This is Christianity; and there is no other Christianity than serving and honoring the Lord Jesus Christ, and waiting for Him. The Thessalonian saints

turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven {1 Thess. 1:9, 10}.

The next point that we have to consider is the coming glory of the Church. The blessed Lord will come for her Himself. His heart is set upon that Church which He loved and gave Himself for; and He is looking forward to present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Hence, in the last chapter of the Revelation, He three times says,

Behold, I come quickly {see Rev. 22:7, 12, 20}!

to which the faithful are supposed to reply,

Even so, come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

He will come again for His church; therefore it is written, that

the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout {1 Thess. 4:16},

and that we shall all be changed -- changed in a moment. This is what is coming. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed -- only think of this -- in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye: for the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven, and whether we are alive or in the grave, (like many who have gone before,) we shall all be changed. The Lord is looking forward to this. He says in the seventeenth chapter of John,

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory {John 17:24}.

Those who have gone before are also looking forward to this. Perfect as we know their happiness is as

present with the Lord {2 Cor. 5:8},

in the condition they are in, they as yet have not their bodies, and are looking forward for the Lord to come, when their bodies shall be raised and united to their spirits, and they will have a body capable of entering into the joys of eternal glory, as one with Christ, for they are His own flesh and bone. In the same way

every believer ought to be looking forward to His coming, and one can thank God for the change that has come over many Christians in this respect. Thirty years ago a man who held the truth of the second coming of the Lord was almost thought to have lost his senses. But now there are thousands who hold steadfastly to this important doctrine as divine truth. I doubt not that the Lord is quickly coming; and this is why He is wakening up the saints to the truth of His coming. Surely, the voice has gone forth,

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh. Go ye out to meet Him {Matt. 25:6}.

Happy those who are waiting for Him; for it is a most rejoicing, soul-comforting, and purifying truth.

The first stage, then, so to speak, in the coming glory is this *change*, and then *translation* -- to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Enoch was translated before the judgments were poured out upon the world; and that is what we are expecting. Do you not see how blessed this is? What would satisfy your hearts? Nothing but seeing Christ. Well, that is what you, dear Christians, shall have. Only be patient and you shall have it ere long. In a little while we shall see His face, and then

“We shall sing more sweet, more loud,
And Christ shall be our song.”

You remember how Mephibosheth's heart was set upon the king, and that during his absence he so deeply sympathized with him in his rejection, that he

neither dressed his feet nor trimmed his beard {2 Sam. 19:24};

and when his eyes lighted upon the king himself, he could think of nothing else, and cared for nothing else. He had David, what could he wish for more? Let Ziba or others have *all* the land, was the utterance of his grateful heart, for as much as

my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house {2 Sam. 19:30}.

And the first glance of our eyes on our precious Lord will so fill our souls with joy, that we shall readily exclaim,

“Farewell mortality!
Jesus is mine.
Welcome eternity!
Jesus is mine.”

Yes, we shall then have full possession of what we have so longed for. Our joy will be perfect; our happiness complete. We shall see that blessed Savior, whom having not seen we love. Yes,

“We shall hear His voice, and see His face,
And know the fulness of His grace.”

In my Father's house,
said Jesus,

there are many mansions [many abodes]; . . . I go to prepare a place for *you* {John 14:2}.

There are many abodes in heaven, but here is a special place for the Church; and He is gone to prepare that place, that where He is there we may be also. You will be there, fellow Christian, as certain as you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. His word is true; His promise is sure; He cannot deny Himself. You will be there in the Father's house, and in that very place which

Jesus has prepared for you by His own presence, and the sacrifice of His own blood.

When we are changed and translated, taken to the Father's house, the *presentation* will take place. We have ready referred to the fifth chapter of Ephesians, where we are told that

Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might *present* it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish {see Eph. 5:25-27}.

Then Jesus will have before Him all those who form the body of Christ, the bride of the Lamb, the Church of the living God. Yes, *He will present her to Himself*. His loving heart will then feel -- "This is the Church that I love, this is the Church that I purchased, this is the Church that is dearer to my heart than myself, this is my bride, to whom I am united for ever." What must it be to have Jesus presenting us to Himself? We are exceedingly happy in Him now, but, as a dear friend said to me the other day, when we see the blessed Jesus, there will be such a gush of love! Who can describe it? for our best thoughts are but poor. But what then? There will be *the judgment seat*, and we shall be manifested before it; the judgment seat of that blessed One who so loves us. I tried to show in the first lecture that the believer has been already judged and put to death as a sinner, in Christ his substitute, on the cross; so that now we are alive in a risen Christ, and death and judgment are behind us. But then, say you, What is the meaning of the passage,

We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ {2 Cor. 5:10},

which we find in the fifth chapter of the second of Corinthians? It refers to those spoken of in the first verse of the same chapter:

We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens {2 Cor. 5:1}.

This describes those who are referred to in the tenth verse. They know they are perfectly safe, and that heavenly glory is secured for them. Nay, more; they know that they have the Holy Ghost, and say,

Therefore we are always confident {2 Cor. 5:6}.

Be assured, then, there is not a question to be raised about our salvation at that judgment seat. That was all settled on the cross, and we have the Holy Ghost as the earnest of our inheritance. In fact, we shall not appear there till we have glorified bodies, and are eternally happy in the love of Christ, and in the personal enjoyment of His glorious presence. Suppose any of you went away from your house for twelve months, and that you left three or four children in charge during your absence. When you came back, would you not have a judgment seat? You would call together those to whom you had committed the trust, and would commend one who had been faithful, reprove, perhaps, another who had not carried out your wishes, would tell a third, possibly, that he might have done better. So at the judgment seat of Christ, each will

receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad {2 Cor. 5:10}.

Thus, you see, it is a question of stewardship, and not a question of salvation at all. Knowing this, it is important that the believer

should live and walk so as to be able to say, "I am doing this or that with the judgment seat of Christ straight before me." In this way the heart will be kept true to Christ.

But what will happen to the saints in heaven after this? Why a great deal, I doubt not, more than we know; but we do know that there will be that most glorious event, the marriage of the Lamb. I apprehend that when Christ comes, according to the fifteenth chapter of the first of Corinthians, they that are His will be caught up to meet Him. This will include more than those who are members of the body -- the Church of God. It will include all the saints -- all who have believed in the Redeemer from Adam down to that time.

They that are Christ's {1 Cor. 15:23}

will be caught up to enter upon the enjoyment of their heavenly blessings -- will be taken up to meet the Lord, and be for ever with Him. We shall be then enjoying the presence of the Lord before the glories of the kingdom are manifested, and while judgments are poured out upon men on the earth. But after a certain time the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation will have its fulfilment, when it will be said,

the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready {Rev. 19:7}.

Now, without being dogmatic, it seems to me in this part of the nineteenth chapter, that the saints then in heaven are divided into two companies; viz., those who compose "the Lamb's wife," and those who are

called unto the marriage {Rev. 19:9}.

Things then take a decided and special form; afterwards all will come out of heaven following Jesus, when He comes in flaming fire to execute righteous wrath and indignation upon the wicked. When it is said,

The marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready,

I apprehend the instruction is, that until that time all those saints will have been in heaven without the Church having taken her distinctive place among them. For, as I have tried to show, the Church has a distinct and special calling, as the bride, and the body of Christ; so that the making ready applies to those who compose the Church of God taking an aggregate form. They will then manifestly and formally, if I may so say, take their position as the bride of the Lamb. The rest of the heavenly saints, as I judge, are set before us as occupying another place, as called ones to the marriage -- spectators, if you please. In the fourth chapter they seem all together, under the name of "elders"; but when those who form the Church, the bride of Christ, take the special place which, in God's grace and purpose, is assigned them, we never get the word "elders" used after. We read of those who

are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb {Rev. 19:9}

-- that is, as I have said, they are there as guests, or spectators. I do not doubt that they will be eternally happy and blessed, and be associated with Christ in the reign; but what position they may hold in the glory I do not know that we are told. But we do know that the Church of God, the body and bride of Christ, has always a distinctive place in Scripture.

What next are we to expect? There will be *manifestation*; for that is the purpose of God. The apostle Paul tells us that

the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now {Rom. 8:22};

and he adds that it is waiting for

the manifestation of the sons of God {Rom. 8:19}.

No person knows now who “the sons of God” are. You may go into a town where there are hundreds or thousands of Christians living, and not know who they are; they are not manifested. But the will of God is, that they shall be manifested -- manifested to the world;

that the world may know,

said Jesus,

that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me {John 17:23}.

This was the prayer of Christ in the seventeenth of John. We read also, in the first chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians, that

the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels . . . when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe {2 Thess. 1:7-10}.

It does not say to be glorified *by* His saints, but to be glorified *in* them. That is to say, we shall be like a number of tiny vessels, into which He will pour His own glory, and the world will see what the riches of the grace of God to us in Christ have been. So that when we are manifested with Christ the world will look up and know that we are the people who were redeemed by the blood of Christ. They will see us sharing His glory, vessels of glory, showing forth His praise. Every dear one in Christ will be a vessel bearing the glory of Christ before the world. Christ will then be glorified and admired *in* those who believe. Do think of this *manifestation*; and not only so, but think, as we read in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation, that when the heavens are opened, and one comes out riding upon a white horse, that the armies which follow Christ will be not only the Church, but all the saints who have a place in the heavenlies. At that time, think also what it must be to be associated with Christ in judgment on the living wicked, to be sharing with Christ in His reign over the earth, to be associated with Christ in His judgment of the wicked dead at the great white throne, and to be eternally with Him --

for ever with the Lord {see 1 Thess. 4:17}.

But we expect to be especially manifested to the world as the bride, the Lamb’s wife. This is brought out in the twenty-first chapter of the Revelation, where we are told that an angel called the attention of the apostle John to the fact that he was going to show him -- now mark! -- show him what?

the bride, the Lamb’s wife (Rev. 21:9).

You see it is the wife now. The marriage is spoken of as having taken place in the nineteenth chapter. The angel says,

Come hither, I will show thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife (Rev. 21:9).

He does not say, “I will show you a city.” And I call particular attention to this, because I do not believe it to be a literal city at all. People talk about the golden gates, and streets, and precious

stones, as if they referred to a literal city. I believe it to be a symbolic city. It is as plain as possible that John was called to see the bride; and we are told that the angel then showed him a city. So also when the apostle had to see the harlot Babylon, as mentioned in the eighteenth chapter, he was again showed a city. But surely Babylon is not a literal city. We are told that in her was found

the blood . . . of all that were slain upon the earth {Rev. 18:24}.

So I understand from this chapter that the Church will come down from God out of heaven, and that those of the nations who are saved will walk in the light of it. You have seen the bright, beautiful sun suspended over your heads, shedding forth its light, so dazzling that you dared not look at its glory. So I believe people who are saved will look up, and see the bride, the Lamb’s wife -- bright and perfect according to the divine mind, and clothed with the glory of God. She will shine with light

like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal {Rev. 21:11}.

We are told here that she had in her foundation the names of the apostles; and in Ephesians that she is built upon the foundation of the apostles, for they were its doctrinal founders. The Church began to be built on earth at Pentecost. This beautiful picture, in the twenty-first chapter, brings us into the millennium, a period of blessing on the earth for a thousand years. You say, How do you know that? Is it not a picture of the eternal state? No; because we are told that

the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations {Rev. 22:1}.

And we find it afterwards stated, that in the eternal state there will be

no more death, neither sorrow nor crying {Rev. 21:4}.

The millennium, though a time of inconceivable blessedness on earth, will nevertheless be an imperfect condition of things. There will be sin, death, and curse, as the sixty-fifth of Isaiah teaches. The period too is limited to a thousand years. There will be “nations” then who will walk in the light of this city; but I do not understand that there will be nations in the eternal state. People boast of nationality; let them go back to the tower of Babel, and consider the sad history of how nationalities came into existence. The Lord Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and to bring in a new creation.

Thus far we have traced the Scriptures a little as to the Church of God and her coming glory; but we must add a thought or two more as to the eternal state, because the subject would be incomplete without it. The Church, the bride and body of Christ, has eternal qualities. It is not only eternal in the sense that it has eternal salvation, but the believer, who now belongs to the Church of God, will always belong to the Church of God. In proof of this, I will only refer to two texts. In the second chapter of Ephesians, which is an epistle emphatically treating of the Church, we are told that God hath made us to

sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the *ages to come* He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus {Eph. 2:6, 7}.

Now mark the words

in the ages to come.

The millennium is one age. What follows the millennium is the eternal state -- ages of ages; and therefore I apprehend this one text proves that the Church, as such, will occupy a special and unique position throughout eternity. But there is another text, if it be necessary, which is still more decided on the point. In the concluding verse of the third chapter it is said,

Unto him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end {Eph. 3:21}.

Here the Church is spoken of as existing as such throughout all ages.

Nothing can be clearer.

A few words in conclusion. Are there any here who are not in Christ? My beloved friends, what a mercy you are out of hell! Thank God you are not in outer darkness! The mercy of God alone has kept you from the bottomless pit! Dear friends, you will never have this glory of which we have been speaking if you are out of Christ. You may be as religious as you like, as devoted as you desire in acts of kindness; you may say over your accustomed forms of prayer ten thousand times a day; still, the one vital question is, Are you in Christ? If you are in Christ, you are saved; you belong to the Church of God; you are heirs of the coming glory; you will be for ever with the Lord. But oh! if you go away from this place rejecting Him -- if you go on to refuse the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, the time of terrible judgment will most surely come. You may die, and be respectably buried, and friends may deeply mourn your loss; but wherever you are, living or dead, Christ, who is the Lord of all, will assuredly find you out. He will bring you to His feet. He will so thoroughly convict you, that you shall not be able to look up, or to answer one word. You will be speechless. He will condemn you to outer darkness, with the devil and his angels, for ever. Do consider, dear souls, what crimson, scarlet sins and guilt you carry about with you. Come, then, to the Lord Jesus just as you are, that you may rejoice in Him as your Savior; for

How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? {Heb. 2:3}.

You may not neglect your honest duties; you may not neglect to say prayers; you may not neglect to go to church or chapel; you may not neglect to read the Scriptures; but, dear souls, you neglect salvation; you neglect Christ; you refuse Him as your Savior. What can be worse? You are, therefore, on the road to eternal perdition. Oh, that you may now acknowledge the rich mercy of God in giving His only begotten Son to die for poor ruined sinners like you and me! that *whosoever* -- observe "*whosoever*" -- whether rich or poor, profligate or moral -- "*whosoever*," grey-headed or youthful -- "*whosoever*" you are, or whatever be your history, condition, or character, if you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, He declares that you

should not perish, but have everlasting life {John 3:16}.

Poor, dear, dying sinner, these are the loving words of that blessed Lord Jesus, who is now in glory looking down upon you. And He is still true to His word, that whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish. There is nothing for you to do; He has done everything to save sinners. Yes,

"Jesus did it, did it all,
Long, long ago,"

that

whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have eternal life {see John 3:16}.

Do not be afraid of this sinner-loving Jesus, the Lamb of God, who delighteth in mercy.

Dear friends, I warn you to-night. Do you ask, What must I do to be saved? I say again that there is nothing for you to do -- it has all been done -- but believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, take Him at His word, rest on His finished work, His sin-cleansing blood. You may be sure He will be true to what He says.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved {Acts 16:31}.

Lecture 4: The First and Last Resurrections

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years (Rev. 20:4-6).

To the believer, beloved friends, “resurrection” is one of the brightest words in Scripture. You know the Lord Jesus declared himself to be

the resurrection and the life {John 11:25};

and such a blessed reality was it, that death could not reign in His presence. Search the Scriptures, and you will find that death never showed itself where the Son of God was. So emphatically was He

the resurrection and the life,

that whether it were a little girl of twelve years in a house, a young man on a bier on the way to the place of graves, or one who was dead and stinking in the grave, it mattered not who it was or where it was, at the word of Jesus they lived again. And so important did the apostle Paul think the truth of the resurrection of the body, that his heart was on fire when he said,

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable {1 Cor. 15:19}.

When certain persons at Corinth attacked this grand fundamental truth of the gospel, we find him at once grappling with it in the most decided and peremptory manner. He declares that if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not raised; but that as Christ is risen (this one Man who was dead and buried in the sepulcher), He is risen as the firstfruits of others that were to follow. And so weighty did he feel this foundation truth of Scripture to be, that he asserts that there is no salvation, that we are yet in our sins, that all who have fallen asleep in Christ are perished, if Christ be not raised from the dead. He also sternly insists upon it as the truth of the living God, that as

by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead {1 Cor. 15:21}.

Beloved friends, the resurrection of Christ from the dead is like the brightest and most glorious light rising upon the dark shades of Golgotha and the sepulcher wherein Jesus lay. It sheds its rays forward and backward. Backwardly this divine light reveals the perfect satisfaction that God Himself found in the sacrificial work of Him who bare our sins in His own body on the tree; of Him from whom God had to hide His face because our sin was upon Him, so that He cried out,

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? {Psa. 22:1}.

It tells us of Him who on the third day was raised from the dead, -- God accounting it a righteous thing to loose the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it; it tells us of the man Christ Jesus who had been dead, that He is alive again, and that for evermore. And, beloved friends, in connection

with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from the dead, He is invested by right with all power in heaven and in earth: He is Lord over the dead and over the living.

To this end,
says the apostle in the fourteenth of Romans,

Christ both died and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living {Rom. 14:9}.

So that the Lord Jesus Christ, now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, has the right to unlock the grave, as well as the power to raise every inhabitant out of it. And part of the work, at least, before the blessed Lord is this, to spoil death and empty every grave, and then to cast death and hades into the lake of fire; so that death will be subdued: for the testimony of both Old and New Testament Scriptures is, that

He will swallow up death in victory {Isa. 25:8; see 1 Cor. 15:54}.

I lay these thoughts before you, beloved friends, at the very outset to-night, before we consider what the Scriptures teach about the first and last resurrections.

In the twentieth chapter of the Revelation, we have twice in the verses I have read, the words “first resurrection.” This of itself ought to be enough for any one to conclude that there must be more than one resurrection of the human family. Otherwise why should it be called “first”? Some, I am aware, would feel a difficulty in receiving this, because their minds are prejudiced against this glorious truth. I propose to-night, before entering on our subject, to examine those Scriptures on which some suppose there is warrant for the idea so common, that there will be only one general resurrection and one general judgment. And I trust, before we conclude our search, that it will be clearly seen, not only that such a doctrine is without a vestige of Scripture authority, but that it is dishonoring to the Lord, injurious to souls, and opposed to the written word of God.

The passage which strikes me as calculated to have the greatest weight with a person desirous of defending the idea of one general resurrection, is found in the first and second verses of the twelfth chapter of Daniel. I will therefore refer to it at once.

And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people (Dan. 12:1):

[observe “thy people”; that is, “the Jews” -- Daniel’s people. There were no others known in those days who would be associated with Daniel:]

and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:1, 2).

Now observe that the words “thy people” are mentioned twice in the first verse. The period referred to is the period of the great tribulation, which I cannot now detain you to enter into; and what is brought out in the first verse in connection with it, that some will be delivered out of it. We find this fact referred to over and over again in Scripture. Then mark the second verse; for this is the verse that I wish specially to examine at this time.

Many of them,

not all of them, but *many* of Daniel’s people; so you see, instead of it being a general resurrection of all nations, the circle includes only Daniel’s people, and that not *all*, but *many* of them.

Many of them shall arise from the dust of the earth, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

Observe also that the time when this takes place is not when the wicked dead are judged; for that, as we shall see by-and-by, will be at *the close* of the millennium. Instead of that, it is immediately in connection with the great tribulation, which *precedes* the millennium. This proves that it takes place at least a thousand years before the judgment of the great white throne. Then there is another point, which is very important, in connection with the examination of this passage; viz., what we find in the twentieth chapter of Ezekiel. This shows that when the tribes of the children of Israel are brought back, (which they will be at the sounding of the great trumpet,) that *some, will be purged out as rebels* (put to shame), and others brought into the blessings of their land.

As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you: and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God: Go ye, serve ye every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me: but pollute ye my holy name no more with your gifts, and with your idols. For in mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them in the land, serve me: there will I accept them, and there will I require your offerings, and the firstfruits of your oblations, with all your holy things. I will accept you with your sweet savour, when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered: and I will be sanctified in you before the heathen. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to your fathers. And there shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have

committed. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for my name’s sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God {Ezek. 20:23-44}.

The point here is, that there will be a purging of those tribes that are brought back. They will all arise, as it were, from the dust of the earth, where they have been hidden. Some (the rebels) will be purged out, and others will experience the blessings of the millennial reign of the Messiah. The passage then in the twelfth of Daniel shows, first, that it is an action confined to Daniel’s people; not all of them, but “*many*” of them. Secondly, that it occurs in connection with the great tribulation, which Scripture clearly teaches to be pre-millennial. Thirdly, the prophet Ezekiel speaks of a special judgment cutting off some, when the scattered tribes of Israel are gathered back into their own land. The prophet Amos also shows us that this purging or sifting of the ten tribes will take place before they reach the land; the result being that

all the sinners {Amos 9:10}

are cut off in judgment, and others brought into blessing.

For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.

I ask then, Is there a shadow of evidence from these verses in Daniel to warrant the idea of a general resurrection?

In the thirteenth chapter of Matthew passages are found which are also considered by some to favour the view of a general resurrection. I refer, for instance, to the parable of the tares and the wheat. The explanation given of it by our Lord is,

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world (age). The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear {Matt. 13:38-43}.

In the first place, observe that there is not one word here about resurrection; and in the second place, that the ministry spoken of is that of angels. Whereas when we Christians are raised, we are told that it will be by the special and direct action of the Lord Himself. Remark also that the action here consists of taking all the bad away and leaving the good -- taking out of His kingdom

all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.

This is exactly the reverse of what will take place when Christ comes for us. The true exposition, I doubt not, is, that when the Lord Jesus Christ comes to introduce millennial blessings He will find abundance of wickedness on the earth. You know He is spoken of as coming to

judge the quick [that is, the living wicked] and the dead [that is, the wicked dead] at His appearing, and His kingdom {2 Tim. 4:1}.

This is an action in relation to the living. The living wicked are taken away. Being only Satan's workmanship (tares), they are removed in judgment. And those who are God's true people on the earth at that time (when the Lord Jesus Christ comes with us at the beginning of the millennium,) will have their place of blessing on the earth. I ask then, Is there the slightest ground whatever for treating this passage as containing any warrant for a general resurrection of believers and unbelievers?

In the 25th chapter of Matthew, our Lord's well-known description of the sheep and the goats appears at first sight to favour the idea of a general resurrection. On considering the passage, however, you will find there is here also the entire absence of resurrection; not a single person judged is raised from the dead. Next, observe, there are four parties -- the king, the sheep, the goats, and the king's brethren. So that, without proceeding further, we see there is nothing to favour the doctrine attempted to be deduced from it, of a simultaneous rising of the saved and unsaved to be judged at the great white throne. The chief person presented in this prophetic instruction is the Lord Jesus Christ, occupying His throne as King on the earth, having all nations before Him, and judging them for the manner in which they have treated the special ministry which He, the King, had sent forth. The judgment passed upon those who had not received the testimony of the King's brethren is a very summary one; they are consigned at once to everlasting punishment. But the righteous, those who believed the testimony, and therefore loved and treated His brethren who brought it kindly, go into life eternal. It is a sessional judgment which the Lord will hold in relation to the nations, and His "brethren" will be present. Observe also that the Lord says,

Come, ye blessed of *my* Father

-- He does not say, "Blessed of *your* Father" --

inherit the kingdom prepared for you *from*

-- He does not say *before*, but *from* --

the foundation of the world {Matt. 25:34}.

The Church, we know, is spoken of in Scripture as chosen in Christ *before* the foundation of the world; but these are blessed in the kingdom, as it is stated, prepared

from the foundation of the world.

They inherit the kingdom. We shall be with Christ at that session; for, after the rapture, we shall be

for ever with the Lord {see 1 Thess. 4:17}.

To sum up then the characteristics of this judgment, it is in connection with "the gospel of the kingdom," which a remnant of Jews will be stirred up by God to publish, after we have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. They are Christ's "brethren" after the flesh. The "gospel of the kingdom" will consist of the glad tidings that Messiah is coming to establish on earth the kingdom so long prophesied of, when

the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea {see Isa. 11:9}.

All nations will then be blessed, according to God's promise to Abraham. They will therefore publish these glad tidings as a witness in all nations, as we are told in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and the fourteenth verse. Some persons will receive their testimony, and, consequently, treat them kindly. Others will persecute, kill (as we find in the ninth verse of the sixth of

Revelation), imprison them, and the like. When the King actually comes, He will judge accordingly. We have seen the results. Observe that the Lord fulfils His promise to Abram in His judgment --

I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee {Gen. 12:3},

as recorded in the twelfth chapter of Genesis and the third verse.

I will now, beloved friends, pass on to another Scripture, which is sometimes used as favouring the thought of a general judgment. In 2 Pet. 3:10 we read,

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

The reason why some persons misunderstand this passage is, they take it for granted that one day must be in prophetic language a period of twenty-four hours. This is not so. We are told just before,

that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day {2 Pet. 3:8}.

Now, if you connect this with what we read in the 20th of Revelation, you will find that the reign of the Lord in the millennium is to extend over a period of a thousand years. In the day of the Lord certain things are to take place. The elements will melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. This is to take place, according to the 20th of Revelation, at the end of the thousand years. Thus we see how all these things can occur in the day of the Lord. There is, therefore, nothing in the passage that favours the thought of there being only one resurrection. The 31st verse of the 17th of Acts is also to be understood in a similar way. It is quite true that God

has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31);

but when we see that the day will extend over a thousand years, it leaves ample room for Christ to judge the living at the beginning of that day, and to raise the wicked dead, and judge them at the close.

There is only one passage more on this point to which I will call attention. It is found in Rev. 1:7,

Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen.

I once heard this preached from by a servant of the Lord as the day of what he called the general resurrection and judgment. But, in the first place, observe that there is not one word about resurrection in it; and, in the second place, it speaks of the Lord's coming. And if you examine the passage regarding the judgment of the wicked dead at the great white throne, you will find that it says nothing about the coming of the Lord. There will be no coming then; and for this reason, -- Christ will have been reigning over the earth for a thousand years, and this judgment will be held at the end of that period.

As I do not remember any other passage of Scripture which is advanced to favour the idea of what is called the general resurrection -- that is, of believers and unbelievers, I will now endeavour to examine those texts which decidedly touch on the subject before us -- the first and last resurrections.

In the ninth of Mark the disciples were somewhat perplexed because the Lord had spoken of some rising *from* the dead. They understood it to mean a rising *from among the dead ones*; for that is the true sense of the passage. They did not question the doctrine of a resurrection of the body. You know the Pharisees held that to be a part of their creed, although the Sadducees did not. We read in the tenth verse,

And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising *from the dead* should mean {Mark 9:10}.

They evidently distinguished between the resurrection of the dead, and the rising from among the dead ones. It implied that some of the dead would rise, while others still remained in their graves. It was a rising from among the dead ones. In the twentieth of Luke the Lord gives an explanation of it. He is speaking on the subject of resurrection, and says in the thirty-fifth verse,

But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage; neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection (Luke 20:35, 36).

Now observe that it is those only who shall be accounted worthy to obtain the resurrection from among the dead ones who are referred to here. I call particular attention to this, because it at once sets aside the idea of there being a general resurrection of the saved and lost. These are clearly persons who shall be accounted worthy to obtain a resurrection from out of the dead ones; and the Lord speaks of them as children of God, *children of the resurrection*.

In the fourteenth chapter of Luke this doctrine is brought out still more clearly. In the fourteenth verse, after speaking of making a feast, and calling to it the poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind, and not their rich neighbours, He says,

For thou shalt be recompensed

-- When?

at the resurrection of the just {Luke 14:14}.

My beloved friends, let me entreat you to allow these words of the Lord to have their due weight upon your hearts and minds. They are not my words; they are the Lord's. He said,

Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.

And, I ask, does that favour the idea, or is it not directly opposed to the idea of a general resurrection? If there is to be, as some say, and as I was taught for many years, a general resurrection of the saved and lost, a kind of general assize, what would be the meaning of the saying,

Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just?

But let us turn to another passage in our Lord's ministry -- the fifth chapter of the gospel by John, and examine it carefully. In the twenty-first verse Jesus says,

For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth [that is, makes alive] whom He will (John 5:21);

and afterwards we are taught that He makes them alive first in reference to the soul, and secondly in reference to the body. In this part of the chapter He speaks of two things -- quickening and judging.

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him. Verily, verily, I say unto you [mark this; it is the Judge Himself who here speaks, -- the very One who is going to judge the world], He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me [that is, the Father], hath [not shall have, but hath], everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation [or shall not come into judgment, as the word might be better rendered]; but is passed from death unto life {John 5:22-24}.

Oh the blessedness of these words of Jesus! And then the Lord goes on to say,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live {John 5:25}.

Now observe, the Lord here speaks of Himself as quickening, or giving life, to whom He will, and the action is what He is now doing -- giving life to dead souls by His word.

The hour cometh, *and now is*

-- now, to-night, all through this dispensation. But some may say, "This is an hour." True; but it is certain that this hour has extended over a period of more than 1800 years. Further down in the same chapter He says,

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation {John 5:28, 29}.

Be careful to mark that Jesus is here speaking of Himself as having power to empty every grave, and that He will do it by His word. Every dead person in the grave shall hear His voice, and shall come forth -- every person, without exception. But at what time will they come forth? Will it not be at different times? What are the words?

They that have done good, unto the resurrection of life;

this is certainly one resurrection;

and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [or judgment];

this is another resurrection. Well, indeed, may it be said in the twentieth of Revelation,

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the *first resurrection* {Rev. 20:6}.

The question may be asked, If there be two resurrections, does Scripture teach us how long the period will be between the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation, or judgment? The twentieth of Revelation gives the answer:

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished {Rev. 20:5}.

This is the period, then, that will intervene between "the first resurrection" -- "the resurrection of life," or "the resurrection of the just" -- and the resurrection of those who are raised to damnation or judgment. But some one, perhaps, will refer me to the fact of both the actions in this verse occupying only an "hour":

The hour cometh.

But when we remember that “the hour” mentioned in the twenty-fifth verse {John 5} has already extended over 1800 years, no difficulty will remain as to the extent of “the hour” in this verse.

Nothing then, beloved friends, I think, can be clearer, than that our blessed Lord, during His ministry in the days of His flesh, taught that there would be more than one resurrection. He speaks distinctly, in the passage to which I have just referred, of two resurrections; and this perfectly agrees with what we find in the twentieth chapter of Revelation, where we have the “first resurrection,” and the living again of the rest of the dead a thousand years after. It is true we have not the expression, *last resurrection*; but we know this will be the last, because when it takes place the heaven and the earth flee away, the elements melt with fervent heat; and this is followed by

new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness {2 Pet. 3:13}.

With regard to the passage in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation, the fourth verse begins by saying,

I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them (Rev. 20:4);

. . . and then we get at the end of the next verse,

This is the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5).

This is the only place in Scripture in which the first resurrection is defined; and I entreat your attention for a few moments while we consider the passage.

It is marvelous that some should have thought that the “first resurrection” is merely a resurrection of principles. But when we find “souls” that have been separated from their bodies by death spoken of, and then living again, and reigning with Christ a thousand years, no question can be left on the mind in concluding that they are persons.

The first resurrection, observe, is not one simultaneous rising. This is where some have made a mistake. You do not therefore find, when Paul speaks of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the dead in Christ shall rise first, and those in Christ who are living upon the earth shall be changed, and go up to meet the Lord in the air, -- you do not find him saying this is the first resurrection. No. It clearly forms part of the first resurrection; but the apostle is careful that he does not call it the first resurrection. In fact, as I have said, you get the first resurrection defined nowhere else in Scripture, except in the twentieth of the Revelation. There we have certain classes of persons put before us, then a short parenthesis, and then the words,

This is the first resurrection.

The fourth verse, therefore, in the twentieth chapter sets before us the first resurrection, and in it there are three distinct companies of persons embraced. First we have,

I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them (Rev. 20:4).

This is one company. Those of you who are familiar with the book of Daniel will remember, that in the seventh chapter, when the Ancient of days comes, the thrones, as we read there, are cast down. But I believe all critics are agreed that it means the thrones are set, for that period introduces us to the beginning of the establishment of the kingdom -- the reign of Christ. Taking it to mean, therefore, that the thrones are set, we find (in Daniel) there is not any person upon them; they are represented as being vacant,

just because it was not within Daniel’s province to prophesy about us. But you find in the Revelation that they are occupied; there is a company of persons sitting upon them, and they are judging. Who are those people? If you turn to the fourth chapter of the Revelation, you will see a company of people there sitting upon seats, or thrones; they have crowns; they are clothed in white raiment; and are worshipers. This precisely describes those who will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air -- those who can sing,

Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father {Rev. 1:5, 6}.

I apprehend then that this first company consists of the heavenly saints -- those who are caught up to meet the Lord in the air when He comes. With regard to judgment being given to them, you remember the apostle, in the sixth chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians, says,

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? {1 Cor. 6:2}.

And again,

Know ye not that we shall judge angels? {1 Cor. 6:3}.

So you see that those who are translated to meet the Lord in the air are associated with Christ when He comes, not only in His reign, but also in judgment.

After we are translated, we find in the sixth chapter that the seals are opened; and when the fifth seal is opened, we have mention of the

souls under the altar {see Rev. 6:9},

-- those who were

slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held {Rev. 6:9}.

These, I doubt not, are the people who will come upon the scene after the saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air; for God has not given up the earth. He will have another testimony after we are gone. A remnant of Israel, to which I was referring just now when examining the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, will next be brought out as God’s witnesses. They will go forth with the gospel of the kingdom. You will say, How do you know they are Jews? Because the language of those “souls” who have been martyred, and are under the altar, is,

How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? {Rev. 6:10}

They do not ask the Lord how long before He is coming, but they ask for vengeance upon their enemies. Now no Christian -- mark! -- would be warranted in indulging a spirit like that. It would be a wicked thing for him to do so. The Christian is commanded to follow Christ, -- to love His enemies. But it was quite consistent for a righteous Jew (and so it will be by-and-by) to deal in righteousness in this way,

An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth {Matt. 5:38},

as referred to by our Lord. These martyred people are evidently in this spirit, and therefore on Jewish ground. White robes are given them, and they are told to rest for a season, till their brethren also shall be killed as they were, because “the man of sin” is coming upon the scene, when many more will be slaughtered. We read then in this fourth verse of the twentieth chapter,

And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God (Rev. 20:4).

This is precisely what we have in the sixth chapter with reference to the

souls under the altar,

and I have sought to show that these come upon the scene after we are gone, and that though they lose all their expected blessings in the earth, God in His mercy will give them a place in the reign with Christ.

This, however, leads me to another point, which may be a difficulty to some. The inspired writer says,

I saw the *souls* of them, &c.

He speaks of them as “souls.” But the subsequent language clears up any difficulty on this point. We are told that they

lived and reigned {Rev. 20:4};

that is, they “lived again,” giving us quite the idea of their having bodies given to them -- living again, and reigning with Christ, as persons. But this is not all. There is another company in this resurrection, and the reference to them in the fourth verse of the twentieth of Revelation commences after those we have just considered. It should be read in this way --

And those which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived [or lived again] and reigned with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4).

But I should be anticipating the subject of the next lecture if I were now to dwell upon this passage. Suffice it to say that this third company consists of those who will be slaughtered under the oppression and diabolical wickedness of “the man of sin” on account of their faithfulness to God. They will lose everything on the earth in fidelity to the living and true God, and they too will have a place in the first resurrection. They will live again, and reign with Christ a thousand years. After this we have a passage intervening -- a parenthesis -- which says,

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished;

and then we have,

This is the first resurrection {Rev. 20:5}.

So that this includes those who shall have died in the faith of Jesus up to the time of His appearing. It embraces all saints who will be with Christ when He comes in flaming fire taking vengeance. The Lord Jesus will not come with His saints till the man of sin is in the full tide of popularity, and Satanic power, and wickedness; for that consummation of diabolical iniquity upon the earth will bring the Lord personally from heaven to hurl this monster of impiety alive into the lake of fire for ever.

We have thus considered the Scripture definition of the first resurrection.

We marvel not that it is added,

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection {Rev. 20:6}.

There is not a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation who will not be there. I do not mean those who so unmeaningly use the common expression, “Of course I believe in the Savior.” But what I mean is, that there is not a self-condemned sinner who has

believed with the heart on the Son of God, who died on the cross to save sinners, but will be there. And for this reason. He has received God’s gift of eternal life now, and that life is Christ; and where Christ is there he must be; for Christ is his life. Therefore,

when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, Then shall we also appear with Him in glory {see Col. 3:4}.

Hence,

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection.

To be associated with Christ in the reign for a thousand years is the point that is spoken of here; but we know from other Scriptures that we are to be

for ever with the Lord {see 1 Thess. 4:17}.

Only think of that! For ever like the Lord! for ever with the Lord! No more sorrow, not another tear! Nothing but unclouded joy! Uninterrupted peace, and rest, and blessing, for ever and ever! So much for the first resurrection.

In the fifth verse we read,

The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished (Rev. 20:5).

The eleventh and following verses give us the details of the last resurrection. We read,

I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works (Rev. 20:11, 12).

This is what our Lord calls the resurrection of damnation, or judgment. Every dead sinner will be there -- those who have died without Christ, who were dead in trespasses and sins. These are the dead, small and great. Those who have received Christ as their Savior will have been raised before. But you find here the dead without exception. I cannot see that there is a single saved person standing before our Lord in this resurrection of judgment: they are called the dead. They have died without Christ, and therefore they will all be judged, and judged too according to their works.

It is a grand and glorious truth of Scripture, that the true believer will not be judged about salvation. This is plainly taught in the ninth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews. In the two last verses we read,

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many (Heb. 9:27, 28).

We thus see that Christ took our sins, and consequently death and judgment, upon Himself; so that what is set before those who are in Christ is not judgment but glory.

Unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation {Heb. 9:28}.

There is no question now as to the believer’s security. We know that he is already saved. Yes, as much as he can be, except his body. He has the present possession of eternal life. He has the divine nature. He has Christ in him. He has received the gift of the Holy Ghost. He is one with Christ in heavenly places, seated in Christ; but he has not the redemption of the body. Therefore what the believer looks for is (thank God) not to be judged; but he looks for Christ to come and give him the redemption of the body. Was

not Christ judged for him? Did not Christ die in his stead? Was not the untold suffering of Christ unto death, when hanging on that tree, God's judgment and condemnation of sin? Were not his iniquities laid upon Christ, that they might never be brought to light again? And does not God say,

Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more
{Heb. 8:12}?

How can there be, then, another question about them? God never even brings them to remembrance. They are gone -- judged, put away by the death of Christ. A person who understood what the death of the Son of God upon the cross was would never dream about being judged for his sins. If Christ's sacrifice were clearly apprehended, such a thought would never enter his mind. Who was it that hung there? Was He not the spotless Son of the Father, in truth and love; who knew no sin; who was in all points tempted like we are, yet without sin? Was He not a Lamb without spot or blemish, who had nothing against Him personally for which He could be judged? Was He not indeed the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased? And just because of this, was He not a suited person for a sacrifice for sin -- a fit substitute for sinners? Blessed be God, He once and for ever settled salvation for us on Calvary; settled it through that one sacrifice for sins which was once offered -- the substitute for the sinner that believes. Therefore our sins have been judged, and the wrath of God has spent itself upon Jesus for them -- upon Jesus His beloved Son, that we might be saved from all our guilt, from all our iniquity, our secret sins, open sins -- yea more, from ourselves. Jesus Christ was condemned and put to death on the cross for it all. He who knew no sin was made sin for us. And God raised Him up again on the third day, as One

not possible to be holden of death {see Acts 2:24}

-- in the infinite glory, perfection, and spotlessness of His blessed person -- because the whole question of sin and condemnation as to the believer had been once and for ever met, for ever judicially and righteously settled. I say therefore that it brings in question the whole value of the atoning work of Christ, for a believer to suppose that he is going to be judged for his sins. I entreat you to banish such a thought from your minds. I beseech you to consider how it dishonors the Lord, how it takes away from the glory of that divine work which He has wrought for us, and how it tarnishes the brightness of that blessed truth expressed by

It is finished {John 19:30},

when Jesus bowed His head in death. Think also how it refuses the truth of the living God, who says,

Their sins and their iniquities will I *remember no more*
{Heb. 8:12}.

Consider too how it sets aside the testimony of the Holy Ghost --

As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation {Heb. 9:27, 28}.

It is for Christ that you, dear believers, are called to look, with death and judgment behind you. Look back on the cross then, dear friends, and see your sins completely judged and blotted out, and the whole question of condemnation once and for ever settled. Look up to the throne of heaven, and see how God, instead of turning away and hiding His face from His blessed Son, as He did upon the cross, has since crowned Him with glory and honor, and

looks upon Him with ineffable delight, as the one in whom He finds perfect satisfaction, and changeless rest.

Beloved, think of these things, I beseech you. We know that the unbeliever is to be judged. It is certain too that he will be judged according to his works. Who can bear that? It is also quite certain that there is not a single unbeliever in this room, if he goes on in his sins, rejecting Christ, no matter what he professes, or what his position may be, but must go to judgment, and appear before the great white throne. Whether "small" or "great," if he trusted not in Christ, he must stand before Him when the books will be opened. The resurrection of damnation -- the resurrection of judgment -- must take place. The body may have mouldered to dust in the grave, so that no human eye may be able to trace a particle of it, worms may have fed upon it, still He who by His word raised up the stinking Lazarus from the tomb, saying,

Lazarus, come forth {John 11:43}!

will raise up that person, whoever he may be, out of the grave; because the purpose of God is that the works of the devil may be destroyed by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that death be swallowed up in victory. Not only is God the God of all grace, but He is the God of truth, the God of holiness, the righteous God; a just God, and no respecter of persons. He hates sin. Every sinner who has continued in unbelief must come up at the resurrection of judgment. And oh, beloved friends, do you see where you are hurrying? How can you bear to think of that awful time? Some of you may have been scoffing, and saying,

Where is the promise of His coming? {2 Pet. 3:4}

We are not surprised to hear of people scoffing. We are not surprised at hearing persons say, "What do these people mean by preaching the coming of the Lord?" It is not uncommon to hear scoffing. What saith the Scripture?

There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, [that is, doing their own wills,] and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation {2 Pet. 3:3, 4}.

But I trust if there are any such here to-night, that God in His mercy will meet with them, as He met with a dear woman many years ago. "They tell me," she said, "that these people are preaching about the Lord coming on the earth again." She doubtless thought it was all nonsense. She said, "I will go and hear them." Accordingly she went. The testimony that night was to the value of the blood of the Lamb, as to the perfect peace and security it gave. It was pointed out that when Christ came those sheltered beneath that blood would be caught up to meet Him in the air. That night God blessed His word to her soul, so that instead of scoffing, from that time she loved and served Christ, and delighted to think of His coming. And I do trust that these lectures may not only be helpful and profitable to the dear children of God, in leading them to examine more carefully what the Scripture says with regard to these things, but that any who come into this Hall unsaved may hear the sweet voice of Jesus, believe on Him, and obtain eternal salvation.

Dear friends, you see you cannot escape the resurrection of judgment, if you reject Christ. If you still grasp the world, if you still refuse salvation through the Savior's precious blood, you must appear before the great white throne and be judged. But may God in His infinite mercy so touch your precious souls, that you may

be led to enquire from this moment whether you will be in the resurrection of life, or in the resurrection of damnation or judgment.

Some time ago I was asked to visit a schoolmistress who had been a professor of Christianity for many years. She said, "I wanted to tell you that I was much struck the other night with the two resurrections. I thought over the subject when I came home, and asked myself the question, In which of these resurrections shall I be found? And," added she, "I was forced to conclude that being such a wicked sinner I must be in the resurrection of damnation; and I have been very unhappy ever since." And so she continued, until she was enabled to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as her Savior. When God, by the power of His blessed Spirit, brought her to look to Jesus and trust in Him, she found peace. Then she could rest upon the precious assurance, that

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have
everlasting life {John 3:16}.

We soon heard that she had peace with God; and some of us walked with her as a Christian for several years, until she was called to fall asleep in Jesus. When the Lord comes, and we are caught up to meet Him in the air, we expect to find her in the first resurrection. May God bless His own word and lead you, dear souls, to examine the Scriptures, and see whether the things you have heard tonight are according to the unalterable word of God!

Let me, in conclusion, say one word to the dear children of God. In the first epistle of John we read,

Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all
things {1 John 2:20};

and in a subsequent verse it is stated,

Ye need not that any man teach you {1 John 2:27}.

I have a reason for putting these Scriptures before you. Since these lectures were commenced a person said to me, "We need to have a certain class of gifted persons to explain the Scriptures to others, in order to have the true meaning of them." But this Scripture shows that we *need* no such thing; so that, supposing you never had another teacher, you have the all-sufficiency of the word of God, and the all-sufficiency of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in you. The Lord has certainly gifted some as teachers, and He uses them; but you are not absolutely dependent on them.

Ye need not that *any man* teach you.

Believing that teachers are absolutely needed is where many dear children of God go wrong, and why they make no more progress in divine things. They depend upon their minister, or their teacher; upon this man's commentary, or that man's book. I am thankful to be taught anything of God *through* any person or channel He pleases. Observe, *through*, but not *from*, any person. The distinction is obvious. If God sends a teacher, let us thank Him; if He speaks to us *through* any one, let us receive the teaching *from* God. But having His Spirit, the unction of the Holy One, we are told that we do not *need* any man to teach us. That is, we are not absolutely dependent on man -- "any man"; for if we were shut up in a prison, or did not see another face, as we have the Bible and the Holy Ghost, we

have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.

We do not, therefore, positively need any man to teach us. But because dear Christians do not see this, they look so much to what

men say, and try to satisfy themselves with the thoughts, opinions, and writings of good men. They say, "This is a good commentary; we can depend upon it"; or, "He is a very popular writer, and is very safe." Because, I say, they look so much to what *men* say, and *rely* upon such things, they get more or less away from communion with God, and the teaching of the Holy Ghost, and do not make real progress in divine truths. Do not mistake me. I am most thankful for all preachers and teachers that the Lord sends, and glad to hear them when I have the opportunity; but when I hear, I feel I ought to judge by the word of God how far what is advanced is according to God's mind. We can do this, because we have

an unction from the Holy One
to
know all things;

and having this, I repeat, we are not put into the place of being absolutely dependent upon any man to teach us. Our responsibility is to the Lord. He has given us His word. He has given us too the Holy Ghost; and those will be intelligent and devoted Christians who can look above men's heads -- who look straight up to the blessed Lord, and, opening His written word before Him,

can from their hearts thank Him for it; and, relying upon the teaching of the Holy Ghost, expect from Him an understanding to understand the Scriptures. I have never yet seen one who has taken this humble and child-like ground who has not received much blessing from the Lord.

Lecture 5: The Man of Sin, And His Complete Overthrow

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth, that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:1-14).

In these lectures, beloved friends, we have hitherto been occupied with subjects showing forth the grace, the power, and the glory of God. But we must remember that, although God has been working in the world from the first, Satan has been working in the world too; so that while the prophetic page points out plainly what God's purposes are with regard to those who are His, we have also dark shadows, calculated to give deep sorrow of heart, set forth in the prophecies of Scripture as to man's future. It is one of these dark pictures of divine truth that we are about to consider this evening

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the man of sin {see 2 Thess. 2:3 -- the Antichrist},

as the apostle calls him in the passage I have read. And perhaps you will be surprised when I tell you that this subject is spread over a considerable portion of the Bible. So extensive is it that I have no thought to-night of setting before you more than a few general characteristics and circumstances concerning this masterpiece of Satan's iniquity. I shall, therefore, content myself with referring only to a few of the Scriptures which might be quoted in the consideration of this subject.

The importance of the subject, beloved friends, holding as it does such a place in prophetic writings, is plainly set before us by the apostle Peter. In the latter part of the first chapter of his second epistle he says,

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn {2 Pet. 1:19}.

So that this and every other part of inspired prophetic instruction is presented to us as a lamp with which God Himself has furnished us, that we may walk well-pleasing in His sight in passing through this present evil world. Many parts of the Old Testament Scriptures call attention to this wicked one; and in the New Testament we find that our Lord Himself, in His ministry, again and again referred in the most solemn way to this same person. In the fifth chapter of John's gospel we find Him saying,

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive (John 5:43).

After the Lord had been virtually rejected by the nation of Israel, as we find in the twelfth chapter of Matthew's gospel, He speaks prophetically of the Jewish nation in connection with this lawless one. He says,

When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none (Matt. 12:43).

That unclean spirit is doubtless the spirit of idolatry, which in the days of the Lord had left the nation of Israel. But it found no rest. By-and-by it will return again, in association with other evil spirits.

Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh with himself seven other spirits [a sevenfold spirit of diabolical iniquity, that is to be impersonated in the man of sin] more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation {Matt. 12:44, 45}.

Nothing can be plainer from these words, than that our Lord here spoke prophetically of the last state of Israel as a nation, when its iniquity shall be full. There is another passage, in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, to which I will just refer. In answering the question of the disciples, when He would come again to Israel, among other things He says,

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, {the image of the first beast of Revelation} spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains {Matt. 24:15, 16}.

Now if you look at the end of the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel, you will see that the prophet refers to the same person whom our Lord here calls attention to in His relation to the

temple, which will have been rebuilt before that. ⁵These references of our Lord's plainly teach the importance of the subject.

The portion of Scripture that I read in Thessalonians shows us that this subject formed a part of the ministry of the apostle Paul in going from city to city. He was not long in Thessalonica; for we find from the Acts that his visit there was short; and although the persons who received the truth were only then converted by his personal ministry, yet he says in writing to them,

Remember ye not, that when I was yet with you I told you these things? {2 Thess. 2:5}.

We know also, from the seventeenth chapter of the Acts and the seventh verse, that what stirred up the persecution there was not only preaching that Christ was the Savior of sinners, but that He was coming to reign as the only and rightful Potentate. The adversaries said,

These all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is *another King, one Jesus* {Acts 17:7}.

We find the apostle, in writing his second epistle to the Thessalonians, under the direction and inspiration of the Holy Ghost, occupies a considerable part of it in setting forth the truth as to the characteristics, ways, and overthrow of "the man of sin."

If you pass on to the first and second epistles of John, you will find that he again and again speaks of this wicked one; and in the book of Revelation, which is a book of results, and looks at things in their ripened condition, you will find a more ample account of the actings and influence of this diabolical working than in any other part of Scripture. From these considerations, therefore, it seems to me to be unquestionable that God has made it an important subject for the consideration of His dear children.

With regard to this fruit of Satan's power, he is called in the extract from the epistle to the Thessalonians we have read,

the man of sin,
the son of perdition {2 Thess. 2:3},
the wicked [or lawless] one {see 2 Thess. 2:8}.

He is called by various names in the Old Testament Scriptures. For instance, he is called in the book of Psalms

the oppressor {Psa. 72:4},

and many other names. He is called by Isaiah "the king." There is a verse in Isaiah to which I must call attention, because he is there seen in connection with his destruction. It is the last verse of the thirtieth chapter:??

For Tophet, is ordained of old; yea, for *the king* it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood: the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it {Isa. 30:33}.

He is called also by the prophet Daniel

the king {Dan. 11:36},

a vile person {Dan. 11:21 -- actually, this is a foreshadow of the final king of the North},

&c. He is called by the apostle John

Antichrist {1 John 2:18};

and in the book of Revelation this Satanic system is brought before us in its full development under the names of the beast {another beast, Rev. 13:11-18} and

false prophet {Rev. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10}.

The question may be asked, What are the characteristics of the man of sin? In reply to which, let me first observe that the account we have is not simply a description of a series of principles, but of a person manifesting human practical action in various ways. He is called

the man of sin {see 2 Thess. 2:3},

because he is sin personified. The context shows us that he is man unbridled, unrestrained in will and pride, and that, under the mighty energy of Satan, he is carrying out the principles of a false, unregenerated, alienated heart -- a heart allowed to manifest to the full its enmity against God. He is described also by the apostle John in his first and second epistles. In the second chapter of his first epistle we read,

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us {1 John 2:18}.

Be sure to notice here that these many antichrists were once in association with those who were connected with Christ --

they went *out from us*.

I call attention to this, because you find in the second chapter of the second epistle to Thessalonians, the apostasy and the man of sin are associated together, and you also see them connected together here by the Holy Ghost through the apostle John. In the first epistle of John we have also the expression --

He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son {1 John 2:22}.

And further,

Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God; and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world {1 John 4:3}.

In John's second epistle we read,

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh: this is a deceiver and an Antichrist {2 John 7}.

Now here we have the moral, or rather immoral, qualities of the person. He subverts the very foundations of Christianity; he denies the Father and the Son; he denies that Jesus Christ has come in flesh; he is thoroughly and openly a rejecter of the foundation truths of Christianity; he is a setter aside of the person of Christ Himself. Moreover, in the second chapter of the second epistle to

5. {Some writers, as H. H. Snell here, have **not rightly distinguished the antichrist**, who is the Man of Sin, the False Prophet, the King of Dan 11:36, the idol shepherd of Zech, the man of the earth, the second beast of Rev. 13 -- **from the first beast of Rev. 13**, who is the coming Prince of Dan 9, the Lucifer of Isa. 14, the last one who holds the power of empire first committed to the Babylonian, Nebuchadnezzar. This first beast of Rev. 13 is the head of the revived Roman Empire. The second beast is the Antichrist, king in Jerusalem, who heads up the worship of the apostates of Christendom and Judaism.}

the Thessalonians, this man of sin, this son of perdition, is spoken of as one

who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God (2 Thess. 2:4).

He does not simply deny Christ, but he opposes God. He denies the only true God; he exalts himself *above* every God; that is, above the gods of the heathen, as well as above the only true God, the God of Israel. He takes his place in the temple (for at that time the temple at Jerusalem will be built), sitting there to be worshiped; and, as we shall see by-and-by when he is revealed, all the world will be taken up with him and worship him. Thus the Scriptures give us clear instruction as to the characteristics of the “man of sin.”

The question now comes, Who can this person be? I am aware that a great many believe that he must be the pope of Rome, but it seems to me to be utterly impossible to reconcile that opinion with the Scriptures we have read. It is convenient for Protestants to throw the whole thing upon the pope, little thinking that they themselves may be deeply impregnated with what has been rightly called “the popery of Protestantism.” If any one said that the system of popery accorded with what we find in the seventeenth chapter of the Revelation, where we have the description of “the harlot,” with whom the kings of the earth and the people committed spiritual fornication, it would be true enough. We read there of multitudes of all nations who are astray in their affections and desires while professing the name of Christ, whose hearts are set upon other objects whilst retaining the outward profession of His name; I say, then, if that was what some contended for as applicable to popery, we should have difficulty in conceding to the assertion that popery has a large place in the religious Babylon of the chapter in Revelation to which I have alluded. But I could not be acting faithfully if I said that that description of the principles there set forth was limited to popery. Doubtless, Popery does take the lead, but I believe it has more or less diffused itself throughout the whole of Christendom.

I will try to give a few reasons to show why it cannot be the pope of Rome that is here referred to under the title of “the man of sin.” In the first place, as we have seen, Scripture tells us that the man of sin opposes and denies the living and true God, not giving God a place, saying that he himself is God. Secondly, he denies the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh, says that he is the Messiah, the Christ, and that he is the person to whose coming the Scriptures refer. Without saying one thing in favour of popery, but believing it to be entirely contrary to the mind of God, yet justice would forbid that I should say that the pope himself shows that he is God, or that he opposes and exalts himself *above* all that is called God, or that he is seated in the temple of God, which marks Jerusalem as its locality, forbidding worship to any God but himself; nor can it be said that he openly and avowedly denies the Father and the Son, and the fact that Jesus Christ has come in flesh. Why, the very motto of the pope of Rome is that he is “God’s vicar on the earth.” It is, doubtless, because there is so much terrible evil associated with the system of popery that Christians have been led somewhat hastily, and without weighing the Scriptures, to associate it with that system of harlotry that we find spoken of in the Revelation as being

drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus {Rev. 17:6}.

But popery and the beast are two distinct lines of truth, as thirteenth and seventeenth of Revelation show. And I believe Satan has helped to foster this wrong conclusion, in order that he might the more quietly and gradually work out this mystery of iniquity, of which we are told in one place that it

doth already work {2 Thess. 2:7},

and in another, that

even now are there many antichrists {1 John 2:18}.

The eyes of many have been closed to the terrible system which Satan has at work round about us; and certainly, if Christians were aware of it, they would see the importance of clinging to the Lord Jesus, feeling that under His care only could they be safe from the many and dangerous snares which are laid to entrap them. Satan is actively and successfully bringing in a flood of infidelity. Then, again, this person who is spoken of as “the man of sin” is to continue his open career a limited time only -- for forty-two months. You will also find at the close of the seventeenth chapter of Revelation that the harlot is destroyed by the kings and beast, and their kingdom given to the beast.

And the ten horns which thou sawest upon [or rather, “and”] the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled (Rev. 17:16, 17).

This shows that the system of popery will be set aside by the kings of the earth. After bearing the burden of this unchaste woman for a long time, the kings and nations grow weary of her, cast her off, hate her flesh, rob her of her earthly riches and glory, and then give their allegiance to the beast. So popery really will have to give way and make room for “the man of sin” -- “the beast.”⁶

But we must pass on to notice another point. There is something spoken of as restraining, keeping down, and hindering the full development of this great mystery of iniquity. We have the apostle telling us in the sixth verse,

And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way; and then shall that Wicked [or that lawless one] be revealed {2 Thess. 2:6}.

Observe, here, the mystery of iniquity began to work in the apostle’s day. John, as we have seen, tells us that the persons who were doing the work of the Antichrist had been in professed fellowship with the saints of God. The evil has been going on from that hour until now. But there is some power that is hindering its full and open revelation. Now, what is that power? It seems very evident that it can be but one. Remember that the agents in this mystery of iniquity are man and Satan; and *they* would not put on the restraining influence, that is very clear. Then we know that God is here, dwelling by His Spirit in the body of Christ -- that is,

6. {The beast on which the woman sits for the first half of Daniel’s 70th week is the political head of the revived Roman empire, i.e., the first beast of Rev. 13. The man of sin, i.e., the final Antichrist of prophecy, is the second beast in Rev. 13, who is also the false prophet of Rev. 19.}

the Church. Are we sufficiently alive to this fact? People read the Old Testament Scriptures, and are delighted when they find that the glory of Jehovah filled the temple; but they little think that the presence of God by His Spirit is dwelling now in the spiritual temple -- the Church, the body of Christ -- composed, not of bricks and mortar, but of living stones, born again of the Holy Ghost, and cemented together by the blood of Jesus. Such is declared in the second chapter of Ephesians, where we are spoken of as being

builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit {Eph. 2:22}.

God's presence, then, is here. God has a dwelling now on earth; it is His Church, composed of His own people, who are

builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

We have two things here: regenerated people -- that is one thing; and the Holy Ghost indwelling these regenerated people as the Church of God -- that is another thing. The Church is God's house, God's habitation; and the point was so solemnly understood in apostolic times, that when a person was put outside the Church in discipline, he was delivered over to Satan. The world is Satan's place. The Church is filled with the presence of God by His Spirit; the world lieth in the wicked one, who

walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour {see 1 Pet. 5:8}.

It seems to me that the great restraining influence is what one sees put in action every day. If a man came into this town with some rampant infidel doctrine, something that attacked fundamental truths of Scripture, -- I ask, who would rise up against him? Who would resist the innovation on the truth? Would not the saints of God? What is the power that would prompt them? Would it not be the Spirit of God, who dwells in them? This is the restraining power to which I allude. The Spirit-taught soul can see the mystery working round about on almost every hand; but it dare not come out openly until the Church is gone. When the hoped-for coming of Christ, the longed-for moment arrives, when the Lord will descend into the air with a shout and voice of the archangel and the trump of God, and His saints are caught up to meet Him, then we find from the twelfth chapter of the Revelation that Satan, who has now access into the heavenlies to accuse the brethren, will be driven out, and will come down upon this earth with great power, knowing that it will be but for a short time. Then, with his mighty influence and energy, he will invest this being with the powers of the infernal regions. But, thank God, we shall not be here then; and this is a very important point to notice. If you turn to the thirteenth chapter of the Revelation for a moment, you will find that when this wicked one is blaspheming, that he not only blasphemes God, but he blasphemes also

the dwellers in heaven {see Rev. 13:6}. ⁷

Who are the dwellers in heaven? They are the saints who have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, who in the previous chapter are called on to rejoice because Satan is cast out of

heaven. It is rather a common expression in the book of Revelation. The dwellers in heaven are set in contrast with "the dwellers on earth." Young believers were acquainted with these truths in the apostle's days. Therefore, the apostle wrote to those early Christians at Thessalonica, taking it for granted that they were aware of this. He says,

Now ye know what withholdeth, &c. {2 Thess. 2:6}.

You must not suppose it requires old Christians to enter into these things. I am persuaded that young Christians often enter into them with a great deal more simplicity and earnestness than old Christians. I have seen many young Christians who have entered into the truths of the coming of the Lord, and His judgments and glories, with the greatest readiness of mind and spiritual intelligence; whereas old Christians, from wrong thoughts which they have obtained from bad teaching, have found it very difficult to unlearn and overcome long-cherished opinions and prejudices. It is happy for any to be ready to bow to God's word. It is well to remember, that however many difficulties some find in their way, it does not alter what is said regarding these things in the unalterable word of God. But to return to our subject. When the saints, then, are gone -- when those who are Christ's have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air -- when that which withholdeth is removed, we are told,

then shall that wicked [or lawless one] be revealed {2 Thess. 2:8}.

Then he will openly appear, but not before.

In the book of Daniel we have instruction as to the working and development of this

mystery of iniquity {2 Thess. 2:7}.

In the seventh chapter we have, first, the four empires of ⁸

the times of the Gentiles {Luke 21:24}

under the similitude of wild beasts, and the fourth or Roman empire is largely described. We have its characteristics in its unity under the form of a fourth beast, dreadful, and terrible, and strong exceedingly. It had great iron teeth; it devoured, &c. We have it also in its *separate kingdoms*, in its "ten horns." *Among them* also another little horn was seen, manifesting intelligence,

having eyes as a man {see Dan. 7:8},

and also

speaking great things {Dan. 7:8}.

The explanation is given in the twenty-fourth and following verses:

And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end {Dan. 7:24-26}.

7. {The reader is reminded that Rev. 13:1-10 refers to the head of the revived Roman empire (the coming prince of Dan. 9). It is the second beast who is the Antichrist, the Man of Sin, the false prophet (the religious mouth-piece of the first beast).}

8. {The fourth empire is indeed seen in its revived state at the time of the end. The little horn of Dan. 7 is the coming Roman prince of Dan. 9, the first beast of Rev. 13 -- the political head. Dan. 7 does not refer to the Antichrist, the Man of Sin.}

This little horn of the beast is doubtless the ruling power of the ten kingdoms -- the fourth beast. The seventeenth of Revelation tells us that the ten kings have one mind, and give their strength and power unto the beast. The power and rule of the whole empire composed then of ten kingdoms is impersonated in this little horn. Observe, too, that he speaks great words against the most High; he blasphemes God; he wears out the saints of the most High; he persecutes and puts to death the saints then on the earth; he will think to

change times and laws, and they [that is, the times and laws, Jewish feasts and ordinances, whatever they may be] *shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time* {Dan. 7:25}

he will set aside the ordinances, however formal and imperfect they may be, which the Jews in unbelief shall then have set up in acknowledging the God of Abraham. The next verse shows us, however, that his dominion is destroyed. The eleventh verse says, that because of the voice of the great words which this little horn spake, *the beast* was slain, and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame. Although this little horn shall have the rule of the ten kingdoms concentrated in himself, nevertheless, both it and him shall be destroyed.

The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away *his* dominion, to consume and destroy it unto the end {Dan. 7:26}.

In all this we see pretty clearly, not only the apostate termination of the times of the Gentiles, but also that its power will be concentrated in blaspheming God and oppressing the saints then on the earth, the faithful Jews. In the ninth chapter the same instrument of Satan is referred to as the one who shall confirm the covenant with many for one week, and *in the midst* of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, &c. This shows us that it will not be till the midst of the week, or at the end of three and half years, that he will be publicly unmasked, and come out in the grossest form of pride and infidelity. With regard to the expression,

a time and times and the dividing of time {Dan. 7:25},

we shall find that "times" are used for "years," as, for instance, in the marginal reading of the thirteenth verse of the eleventh chapter. This, too, agrees exactly with the periods of forty-two months, and 1260 days, the time that the beast of the Revelation will continue after he is revealed. In the eleventh chapter we have the wilful king spoken of in the twenty-first and twenty-second verses.

And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant {Dan. 11:21, 22 -- this is actually a past precursor to the king of the North}.

Let us also read the thirty-sixth and following verse.

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall

magnify himself above all {Dan. 11:36, 37 -- this is the Antichrist, king in Jerusalem, the man of sin}.

Without making further remarks on these portions of the book of Daniel, it is evident that they refer to the same period as that we have been reading in the second epistle to the Thessalonians -- a period when the Gentile power, which was given by God into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, will be found in direct league with Satan, in open blasphemy and idolatry -- a period when the Jews, except a faithful remnant, will fall down and worship a man, who opposes and exalts himself against God -- a period too when those who are faithful to the living and true God will have to seal their testimony by their own blood. But all this is more fully brought out in the book of Revelation, to which we will now turn.

As I have said, the Revelation is a book of results -- everything is there seen in full bloom. The whole anti-Christian system is there brought out. God and His adversaries there meet. The rightful heir -- the Lord Jesus -- is there seen. In the thirteenth chapter the mystery of iniquity is fully developed. Two instruments of evil, under direct Satanic power, are brought before us. The first and second verses give us the origin and connections of the first beast.

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority (Rev. 13:1, 2).

These verses, compared with the former part of the seventh of Daniel, show us that the qualities of the four empires are concentrated in him. His ten horns are also crowned, to show that he is the ruling power of the ten kingdoms. The names of blasphemy upon his heads also signify his antagonism to God. Observe also that the dragon, who, in the twelfth chapter, is said to be

that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world {Rev. 12:9},

inspires the beast.

The dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

So that we must not look at the beast as simply man, but man unbridled and energized by the power and authority of Satan. We know that Satan entered into Judas. We see there a sample of his ways. From that moment he was so set against Christ, that he went out from his presence; and was so bent upon consummating his evil purpose, that Jesus said,

What thou doest, do quickly {John 13:27}.

He betrayed him with a kiss! No marvel then that such diabolical and deceivable ways will be practised by man on the earth by-and-by, when all the malice of Satan, and all the unrestrained enmity of man's heart are combined. We can understand too, I think, why he has such general popularity that

all the world wondered after the beast {Rev. 13:3}.

There may be a rebuff,

one of his heads, as it were, wounded to death {Rev. 13:3};

but he will soon recover.⁹ His deadly wound will be healed, and all the world wonder after him. Satan has always been ambitious of being worshipped; and he will have it then. You remember he proposed giving all his power and glory to Jesus, if He would *worship* him. But the Lord of glory resisted the foul offer. Not so by-and-by. There will be plenty of devil worshipers then. We are told, in the fourth verse,

And they worshipped the dragon, [that is, the devil, as we have seen] which gave power unto the beast (Rev. 14:4).

The beast is worshipped too.

They worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him? {Rev. 14:4}.

Alas! this suits man, to own subjection to one who can show his power in establishing human greatness in this sin-stricken and impenitent world. Man loves to see greatness, glory, and power in connection with himself as a sinner, and the old creation accredited in its present ruin. The people would gladly have made Jesus king on those terms. They felt how advantageous it would be to themselves to have a king who could work such miracles as to feed thousands on five barley loaves and two fishes; and this purely selfish consideration led them to wish they could have Jesus for a king. But His kingdom was not of this world. Man's mind must be changed, the question of sin and guilt must be righteously settled, before He could take His rightful place as king over all the earth. Satan's way is to ignore, if possible, the question of sin; to exalt himself and man; to oppose God and deny Christ; and when this deep

mystery of iniquity,

so long at work, is fully ripe, then will be strikingly manifested the awful truth of the words his foul breath uttered in the holy ear of the Son of God, when he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,

All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and *to whomsoever I will I give it* {Luke 4:6}.

How seriously we should regard the principles so actively at work in our day, of exalting man and making so little of God and of Christ; for we see where they must ere long end.

But the characteristics of this first beast are further described in the fifth and following verses.

And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations (Rev. 13:5-7).

The beast, then, is emphatically a blasphemer. He blasphemes God, and blasphemes the dwellers in heaven; he oppresses and overcomes the saints; and oh, how terrible! he has *power* given to him; only think of this,

power given to him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

How peculiarly solemn this is! He is, however, only to continue forty and two months,

or three years and a half. All this very much corresponds with the description given of the "little horn" in the seventh chapter of Daniel. There is, however, a most terrible addition here.

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8).

This is a little of what is coming upon the earth. This is where many are eagerly rushing. But the power of the great deceiver will be so great, that none shall escape being drawn into the vortex of this diabolical snare, whose names are not written in the book of life. The saints then will have to manifest patience, and to exercise faith; and the Spirit adds a most seasonable word --

If any man have an ear, let him hear {Rev. 13:9}.

How gracious of God, not only to give us such details of things soon coming upon the world, but to exhort us to have a hearing ear, in order that we may *now* maintain a path of active separation from all the principles of antichrist that surround us! All this, beloved friends, reads deep, practical lessons to our hearts.

The second beast seen in this chapter, who is also called in the nineteenth chapter

the false prophet {Rev. 19:20},

is leagued with the first in this master-piece of diabolical deception. It is very important to notice that

he exerciseth all [not some, but *all*] the power of the first beast {Rev. 13:12};

not a wit less in *power* than the first, to whom Satan gave his power, his seat, and great authority.

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed (Rev. 11:12).

Observe, he is a false prophet. He has not ten horns, but two horns like a lamb, -- outwardly lamb-like, but really Satanic;

he spake as a dragon.

In this way he deceives. There is the entire absence of divine truth. It is a lying agency of Satan's. Jesus said in Matt. 24 that there would be false Christs and false prophets; and men who hearken not to Christ's words, and love not the truth, will fall into this fatal snare. There are three ways in which he will deceive those who dwell on the earth. First, he will do the same thing that Elijah did to prove that the God of Israel is the living God in a time of idolatry and departure from God, -- he brought fire down from heaven, you will remember, to consume the sacrifice. Hence, we are told in the thirteenth verse, that

he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men (Rev. 13:13).

Secondly, he will work miracles. We know that our Lord in the fifth of John, thirty-sixth verse, referred to the works that he did in His Father's name as proof that He came forth from God; and Peter, when preaching to the Jews on the day of Pentecost,

9. {The wound of death will occur in the middle of Daniel's 70th week. See the pamphlet by A. C. Brown, *The Revelation Chronologically Arranged* (available from Present Truth Publishers), where this is discussed in detail.}

referred to this same point as a testimony of God's approval. He said,

Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know (Acts 2:22).

We read also of this lawless one in the second chapter of the second of Thessalonians, that his

coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders {2 Thess. 2:9}.

Thirdly, he will give breath (not life, but breath; see margin) to an image which the people should make, and also cause it to speak. Can we conceive a deeper deception? Can we imagine how any can escape this snare of the fowler untaught and unaided by the Spirit of God? What help will abstruse reasoning and the refinements of philosophy be then? Why reason must conclude that he is the Messiah, a true prophet of God. Reason must say, he does what Elijah did, he does what Christ did; yea, (though not allowed to give life,) he gives to a carved idol of man's devising breath and speech;

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give breath unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (Rev. 13:14-17).

Once more, I ask, beloved friends, is it possible to identify this description with the abominations of popery? Time rolls rapidly on, and soon these prophetic lines will be realities on the earth. Observe, too, the impossibility of neutrality in that day. Some men now try to hide themselves under the plea of "making no profession at all," and pride themselves on it, little thinking that by this they openly refuse allegiance to Christ. But there can be no neutrality in the days of

the man of sin.

None can escape; they must either have

the mark of the beast {Rev. 16:2; 19:20},

or be persecuted or slaughtered with the faithful remnant.

From all that we have seen in these Scriptures as to the characteristics of this Satanic iniquity, we can understand how effective his entry into covenant with the Jews may be, and how easily he may obtain the kingdom by flatteries, before he is openly revealed in *the midst of the week*, when he will cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease, and the idol will be set up in the holy place -- the abomination of desolation.

But, further, we must remember that God always overrules man's ways, and Satan's too, for the accomplishment of His own counsels and purposes. All this evil therefore is permitted and overruled to carry out God's will. God is in all this sending upon men

strong delusion {2 Thess. 2:11}.

God sent His beloved Son the faithful witness, and men rejected Him; they shall, therefore, in retributive justice, receive a false witness. They refused the truth, they shall now believe a lie. They saw no beauty in the true Christ, they shall wonder after a false one. They would not have Him, in whose mouth was no guile, they shall therefore receive the lie of the deceiver and think it is truth. The fact is, that God has given His truth not to amuse the intellect, but to win the heart; not to exalt man, but for the glory of Christ. It is to be feared that many still trifle with divine truth. They talk about it, raise questions about it, but do not receive it *in the love of it*. Hence this fearful judgment of God in this terrible delusion. These very miracles of the beast and lying wonders, under direct inspiration of Satan, will be allowed,

because they received not the *love of the truth*, that they might be *saved* {2 Thess. 2:10}.

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness {2 Thess. 2:11, 12}.

This is a very remarkable expression --

received not the love of the truth.

It is a word for the heart and conscience. It does not say, "because they did not profess to be Christians," or "because they did not go to the sacrament," as it is called, or "because they did not know the way of salvation." No, God searches *the heart*. Whatever knowledge they had, or profession they made, they had *no love of the truth, that they might be saved*. It is easy to say, "I have been neglectful, I must turn over a new leaf," and the like; but that does not do for God. The testimony of His blessed gospel is the ministry of divine, perfect love. It tells us that

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life {John 3:16}.

And the soul that receives this wondrous love of God in Christ His Son, "receives the truth in love." It comes to the heart of such as a message of richest mercy, and thus begets love in the heart to God. That it is the most blessed and essential truth of Christianity the apostle John declares, when he says,

We love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

Real, vital Christianity is love. God's love to the sinner is manifested in the death of His beloved Son; and the soul that really believes on Him for salvation must therefore receive the love of the truth into his heart. Observe, beloved friends, it is "the truth," not men's opinions, but God's word.

Thy word is truth {John 17:17},

said Jesus. This is what men are now rejecting; and God will send this

strong delusion

on account of it. He will permit Satan, through the false Christ, to publish a lie, which they will receive: they will be deceived by the

lying wonders {2 Thess. 2:9}.

Do think, beloved friends, on the vast solemnity of this point. Already its shadow may be stealing quietly on, and the blinding process almost ready to begin. It may be that the hardened conscience and unimpressible heart -- alas! so manifest -- combine

to show that the time is not far distant when the dark curtain will drop and envelop men's minds, when darkness indeed will cover the earth, and *gross* darkness the people. As we have seen, the delusion will be overpowering -- it will be a snare that shall come upon all the dwellers upon earth. What makes it so very awful, is the fact that *God* sends it.

God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness {2 Thess. 2:11, 12}.

You see then, beloved friends, what is coming upon men before long, and that too when they are full of wonder and delight at the greatness and power of "the beast." Surely the wise of this world will then be taken in their own craftiness. A few faithful ones will be owning God in this time of open blasphemy and infidelity. Jewish saints we know (but in faithfulness to the God of their fathers) will refuse to fall down and worship the beast. The result will be that some will be put to death; others will escape, or be brought through. God will stand by and sustain them, as He always does those who trust in Him. The three men who were cast into the fiery furnace, because they would not dishonor God by falling down and worshiping the image which Nebuchadnezzar set up, are strikingly typical of this faithful band of Israelites. After we are gone they will be raised up, and their testimony will be suitable for a time when God will be again specially dealing with people on the earth. God has generally had a witness in the world, and He will have it to the end. After the Church is gone the Spirit of God will begin to work in a remnant of Jews, and inspire them with Jewish hopes, according to the fathers and the prophets. They will refuse to pay homage to the false Messiah, and the image set up. Their hope will be that the God of Abraham and of David will soon send the promised Messiah; that God will fulfil His word in setting His king upon the holy hill of Zion. We find in some of the Psalms their earnest cries to Jehovah to deliver them from their persecutors. In the *Psa. 79* they cry,

O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and there was none to bury them. We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire? Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place {*Psa. 79:1-7*}.

They are recognized as being on Jewish ground from the imprecatory character of their cries. It was a righteous thing for a Jew to call for vengeance upon his enemies, and *it will be again* when the Jew comes upon the scene as such. *Now* a Jew who believes God's testimony about Christ ceases at once to be a Jew; for he is baptized into the body of Christ, he belongs to the Church of God; and a Christian is instructed to bless them that curse him, to recompense to no man evil for evil; he is told to overcome evil with good:

If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink &c. {Rom. 12:20, 21},

But, according to Old Testament Scriptures, the guiding principle was

an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth {Matt. 5:38};

it is no marvel then that we find such cries in the Psalms, that God might be

known among the heathen in our sight by the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed {*Psa. 79:10*}.

In the 80th Psalm, they are seen again crying for salvation. They most touchingly appeal to the

Shepherd of Israel {*Psa. 80:1*};

they feel the fiery persecution long and wearisome; they are conscious of not being in the place of blessing proper to God's people. They cry,

Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. O Lord God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people? Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours; and our enemies laugh among themselves. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved {*Psa. 80:3-7*}.

They liken their cruel oppressor to a wild boar out of the wood, or a wild beast, wasting and devouring the vine which God brought out of Egypt. They therefore cry in the 14th and following verses,

Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. It is burned with fire, it is cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved {*Psa. 80 14:19*}.

We have here, I believe, those who are referred to in the thirteenth of Revelation, --

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints {*Rev. 13:10*}.

In standing up for the God of Israel, at a time when infidelity has a world-wide popularity, they will be connected, as we may suppose, with the severest trials of patience and of faith. Some will have to seal their testimony with their blood, and having lost their longed-for inheritance on earth, will have a place given them in heaven. This is why it will be said at that time,

Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord *from henceforth* {*Rev. 14:13*}.

Others, like Noah, will be brought through this great tribulation, and then enjoy the blessing on earth which follows. I do not doubt that the 144 thousand seen standing on Mount Zion with the Lamb are the spared saints of this time of trouble. No one can imagine what the severity of this

great tribulation {*Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14*}

will be. Our Lord said it will be

such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be {*Matt. 24:21*}.

This is enough to show its deep unparalleled oppression and sorrow. Thank God, mercy will even then rejoice against judgment, for many will be saved out of it. Not only a remnant of

Israel, which we have been considering, but that countless multitude which John saw of

all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,

in the seventh of Revelation, will come out of the great tribulation, as the 14th verse tells us. What a glorious salvation! They will owe it all of course to the blood of the Lamb, as all who are brought into blessing before God must; for on no other ground can blessing be secured.

But there is another point I must refer to before concluding this lecture. It is the complete overthrow of this diabolical work. The lawless one is destroyed; not by the Church, but by the personal coming of the Lord. Instead of finding the world converted, the Lord will find it as it was in the days of Noah; and as they knew not *until* it was too late, --

until the flood came and took them all away {Matt. 24:39},

-- so ignorant and unprepared will men be when the Lord is revealed from heaven. Instead of truth prevailing, it will be Satan's lie. Instead of Christianity, it will be infidelity. The beast will be worshiped, and the false prophet be beguiling the people by miracles, especially by having given breath to the image which had been made and placed in the temple. But beside this, as we have seen, the Lord will find a few faithful ones, upon whom He will arise as the

Sun of Righteousness {Mal. 4:2}

with healing in His wings, to establish them in the promised blessings of their own land. But He will come in flaming fire, and with the besom of destruction, upon those who know not God and have obeyed not His gospel.

Before the Lord Jesus comes out of heaven to execute wrath upon the living wicked, this remarkable working of Satan's will have been in operation, so as to bring to a focus, as it were, the people of the habitable world in association with the beast. Satan, no doubt, believes that "union is strength"; but God, who permits everything to work for the furtherance of His own purposes, allows even this, in order that the consummation of wickedness in these last days, may be at once judged, and receive the righteous indignation, and wrath of the Son of man, to whom all judgment is committed.

Not only are we informed that the wide and deep Euphrates will be dried up, so as to facilitate the confederation of the eastern and western powers, but three emissaries of Satan will be sent forth to accomplish a manifested union of the anti-Christian powers. In the sixteenth of Revelation we read,

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty {Rev. 16:13}.

Thus we see three unclean spirits, spirits of devils, working unobtrusively like frogs, exercising miraculous power, issuing from the mouth of Satan, the beast and the false prophet, and so acting on the kings of the whole habitable world as to centralize its power, and bring about the awful crisis of Armageddon.

This being done, the masterpiece of diabolical iniquity on the earth seems complete. Satan, who has been an imitator all through,

now glories in a trinity of evil -- the beast, the false prophet, and the image. ¹⁰It comes up as a stench in the nostrils of God. The little remnant of faithful ones on earth have been crying to the God of Abraham for vengeance, with the oft-repeated

How long? {Rev. 6:10}.

Their sighs and groans have been heard in heaven. The time has thus arrived when Jesus should personally come in flaming fire and take vengeance. And this ripened iniquity of human and Satanic abomination will demand the most summary and severe judgment. Jesus will grapple at once with "the beast" and "the false prophet," and plunge both alive into the lake of fire.

But observe, so inveterate is the enmity against God and hatred to Christ on the part of this

son of perdition {2 Thess. 2:3}

and his associates, that the foul climax is reached by their confederating together to go out to meet the KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS and His glorified followers when they come out of heaven. So involved will the kings of the earth and their armies be in this

strong delusion {2 Thess. 2:11},

that they will madly oppose the only Potentate to the last. Alas! alas! for man, when given up to the deception of the great adversary. All this is fully brought out in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation. Let us read from the eleventh verse to the end.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written, that no man knew, but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun: and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth and all the fowls were filled with their flesh (Rev. 19:11-21).

10. {Actually, the image is of the first beast. The evil triad that will be worshiped is the first beast (the head of the revived Roman empire), the Antichrist (the second beast of Rev. 13), and Satan.}

This is a pre-millennial scene, or rather, it ushers in *the day of the Lord*. The first act of Christ's reign appears to be this summary judgment on the living. The heads of this violent outrage are consigned at once to their eternal doom. The others are slain, and will be raised again from the dead, and finally judged at the great white throne. We should have expected, from the portion we read in the Thessalonians, that this judgment would be special on the lawless one and at once, when the Lord came; for it is said,

whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth,
and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming
{2 Thess. 2:8}.

How clear is it, then, that the Antichrist is not to be destroyed by the Church, or overcome by the gospel! To suppose either is a great mistake. No, beloved friends, we are here to witness for Christ, to obey His word, and to follow Him; but that passage we hear so often misapplied,

He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet
{1 Cor. 15:25},

has not yet began to have its accomplishment. When the Lord reigns, we shall reign with Him. *Now* He is preaching the gospel of divine grace to every creature. When He rises up and shuts the door, and comes forth in flaming fire, it will be to reign in righteousness, and judge with equity. Then there will be rejoicing in heaven, as we find in the eleventh of Revelation, saying,

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our
Lord and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever.
. . . We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art,
and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy
great power, and hast reigned {Rev. 11:15-17}.

I repeat, that *now* Jesus is ministering, by His servants, the gospel of redeeming grace, saying,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely
{Rev. 22:17}.

Still His arms are wide open to receive and save to the uttermost every sinner that comes to Him. Happy those who now take Jesus at His word, who believe to the saving of their souls. A little while, and everything around us will be turned upside down. The patience and longsuffering of God will reach its utmost limit; the measure of man's iniquity be full. The world will have reached its climax of evil. *Now*, thank God, grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life; but in a little while Christ will take His great *power* and reign. *Now* is the accepted time; *now* is the day of salvation. *Then* men will be judged in righteousness, and ruled with a rod of iron. Well might the prophet enquire,

Who may abide the day of His coming? {Mal. 3:2}.

Who, we may ask, can stand before the omniscient eye of a sin-hating God? If ever there was a time when we should urge sinners to

flee from the wrath to come {Matt. 3:7; Luke 3:7},

it is *now*. If any say, Where? we reply, to the open arms of the Son of God; for He is still able to save all that come unto God by Him. I earnestly beseech you, unsaved ones, to receive Jesus as your Savior at once. Delay not. *Now* God is saving sinners through Christ; *to-morrow* may be too late. If any of you say, How must I come to Jesus? I reply, Just as you are, in your sin and guilt and ruin, with all the burden of a guilty conscience; come

as you are, and come now! Oh, that the language of some dear souls at this time may be --

"Just as I am, and waiting not
To rid my soul of one dark blot,
To thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,
O Lamb of God, I come."

May the Lord grant His blessing on our hasty glance at some of the awful realities coming upon men! His word is truth. Jesus said,

Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not
pass away {Matt. 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33}.

The subject is solemn, weighty, and important. We have all much to learn about it. My address to-night is little more than a few fragmentary and suggestive remarks. Let us search the Word of God prayerfully on the subject. We shall find it very extensively scattered over the range of Scripture. Like all revealed truth, it is sanctifying to the believer. The reason why God's children do not get more blessing is because men's opinions are looked at so much, instead of God's truth being searched in prayerful dependance on the Holy Ghost. May He bless all His dear saints!

Lecture 6: The Kingdom of Heaven

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 4:17).

Our subject to-night, beloved friends, is “the kingdom of heaven.” And when I advert to the fact that the expression occurs in the gospel by Matthew just as many times as there are chapters in that gospel, I need say nothing more to assure you of the importance of the subject.

“The kingdom of heaven” is an expression that occurs only in Matthew, and we must not confound it with “the kingdom of God”; for although sometimes the terms are used interchangeably, yet there is never an alteration from one to the other without the Holy Ghost having a distinct reason for it; while at other times they are used in very different senses. For instance, the kingdom of God in one sense expresses, if I may so say, the largest thought in Scripture. It is God’s kingdom, that which has to do with God -- Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In the eternal state the Son will have delivered up the kingdom to God, that God may be all in all. The kingdom of God in this sense is that which a person enters into only by regeneration. Many a false professor belongs to the *kingdom of heaven*. But Jesus said,

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the *kingdom of God* {John 3:3}.

And the Holy Ghost by Paul also says, that

flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God {1 Cor. 15:50}.

So that the kingdom of God is sometimes very distinct in Scripture from the kingdom of heaven, which I trust will be made plainer as we consider the various Scriptures on the subject.

Let me also say, that the kingdom of heaven is not the same thing in Scripture as the Church of God. The mistake of confounding these two things is one of the most fruitful sources of error in the present day, and greatly affects the Christian’s walk and conduct. They differ exceedingly in various ways. Let me call attention to a few of those differences. First as to the *relationship of Christ*. Those who will be in the kingdom of heaven, looked at in its best sense, will have the relationship with Christ of subjects to a King. They will be reigned over and ruled by Him as a perfect King would rule His subjects. The relationship of the believer with Christ now, as being in the Church of God, is the relationship of the bride or body of Christ -- membership of His body -- union with Christ; so that Christ is never called in Scripture the King of the Church. I am aware that in the fifteenth chapter of Revelation there is an expression

king of saints;

but the margin reads

king of nations {Rev. 15:3};

and this is the true meaning. Christ is Lord in the sense of a husband being the head of the wife; so that our destiny is to reign with Christ, to sit on the throne with Him, to share His glory, to possess the kingdom with Christ. Therefore you see there is an amazing difference as to relationship. Then as to *discipline*. With regard to the kingdom, when the servants in the parable of the wheat and the tares ask whether they shall root up the tares, the Lord said,

Let both grow together until the harvest {Matt. 13:30}.

In the kingdom-condition of things, the tares are not to be touched until the Lord Himself comes and sends His angels to deal with them; but in the Church of God, holiness is to be the characteristic of the assembly. No fellowship with unbelievers; no communion with that which is evil; but separation from the world.

Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing {2 Cor. 6:17};

put away from among yourselves that wicked person {1 Cor. 5:13};

and such like scriptures, show the mind of Christ as to what should be the discipline of the Church of God. Then again as to *hope*. The hope proper to the kingdom is, that the period will come when what is evil now upon the face of the earth will be swept away, and that the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. But the hope proper to the Church of God is that of being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so to be for ever with Him.

These are some of the points of difference between the principles of the Church of God and the principles of the kingdom; and if I speak of any persons being now, as to their souls, on kingdom ground, I mean such as are seeking to maintain its principles, instead of contending for the distinctive truths of God’s assembly. The kingdom of heaven is not defined in Scripture; but if I were to make a suggestion on the point, I should say that the kingdom of heaven consists of persons on the earth taking a place of acknowledging the authority and rule of the Lord in heaven. It may be either true, or mere nominal profession.

In the gospel by Matthew alone, I repeat, we meet with the expression, “The kingdom of heaven”; but before entering upon the subject, it seems to me that it might be helpful to say a few words on some of the leading characteristics of each of the four gospels; for I am persuaded, my beloved friends, that the gospels are less understood by Christians than perhaps any other part of God’s word.

The four gospels present to us four distinct aspects of the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh, and each writer was inspired

by the Holy Ghost to deal with a special line of truth concerning Him.

Matthew presents Him to us as the Messiah; in Mark we have Him as the perfect servant; in Luke He is peculiarly dwelt on as the Son of man; and John most blessedly unfolds Him as the Son of God.

In Matthew we have, in the first chapter, the genealogy of the Lord traced from Abraham and David, because these are the two roots of the children of Israel, -- promise being specially connected with Abraham, and royalty with David. Jesus is here traced from them, and is presented to us in relation to the Jewish people all through this gospel. He is introduced as born king of the Jews. We have the Sermon on the mount more largely brought before us than in any other gospel. The parables of the kingdom of heaven, of which there are many, are only found here. We have also two remarkable expressions in relation to the crucifixion of Christ. One is the imprecation of the Jewish people --

His blood be on us and on our children {Matt. 27:25};

the other is a quotation from the 22nd Psalm,

He trusted in God: let Him deliver Him {Matt. 27:43},

-- bringing into ridicule His trust in God. These things are noticed in this gospel alone. Moreover, the soldiers being bribed with money to tell the lie, that His disciples came by night and stole Him away while they slept, having such special reference to the Jewish people, is recorded only in this gospel. Lastly, in Matthew, the Lord Jesus is set before us as risen from the dead, but not ascended. The evangelist speaks of Him as risen, and standing on the earth, and sending out His servants to disciple the nations. Christ assures them of His presence all the days until the completion of the age.

In Mark we have the elect servant, in whom Jehovah delighted, doing most perseveringly and uninterruptedly the will of Him that sent Him. We find the words "immediately," "straightway," and "gospel," used more than by any other evangelist. We get the looks and feelings of this perfect Servant referred to in a way we have not elsewhere. We find that

He looked round about on them with anger {see Mark 3:5},

-- that

He sighed {Mark 7:34},

-- and, again, that

He sighed deeply in His spirit {Mark 8:12}.

Connected with the persevering ministry of this blessed One, we are told,

They had no leisure so much as to eat {Mark 6:31};

and again,

They could not so much as eat bread {Mark 3:20}.

He is thus presented in untiring devotedness until He sat down on the right hand of God. He always did those things that pleased Him; it was His meat and drink to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work.

In each of the gospels we have the cross, and circumstances connected with the death of Christ most blessedly unfolded; but each of the evangelists relates the particulars according to the

special object which the Spirit of God gave him in writing the gospel.

In Luke we see the perfect Man among men. The first chapter gives us one of the most beautiful pictures that we have in Scripture. We have, on the one side, the portrait of the child, John the Baptist, who was filled with the Holy Ghost from his birth; and on the other, the picture of Him who was the holy thing, the Son of God. The one is called

the prophet of the Highest {Luke 1:76};

and the other is called

the Son of the Highest {Luke 1:32}.

In the next chapter we have the

swaddling clothes

and

the babe lying in a manger {Luke 2:12}

described, because it is peculiar to the object which Luke had, under the Holy Ghost, of unfolding the glories of the person of Him who was the Man Christ Jesus. Then you remember that the genealogy of Christ is traced, not, as in Matthew, downwards from Abraham and David, but quite the reverse, -- from Mary back to Adam and to God. Because He is here presented, not, as in Matthew, as the Seed of Abraham, and the fruit of David's loins, but as the Seed of the woman who was to bruise the serpent's head. We have also, in the course of this beautiful gospel, the child

twelve years old {Luke 2:42}

brought before us, which we have nowhere else. We have also the touching story of the Lord meeting the widow of Nain carrying her only son to the grave, and how his tender heart, moved with sympathy and compassion, raised him from the dead, and delivered him to his mother. We find also in this gospel the charge brought against this blessed Jesus, that He received sinners, and did eat with them. This charge drew from the Lord's gracious heart that grand, sublime, and precious story of grace commonly called the parable of the prodigal son. The touching picture, too, of the rich man and Lazarus is alone found in the gospel by Luke. At the end of this gospel, we find that when the Lord was risen from the dead, in perfect keeping with Luke's object, He is traced as having walked with the two going to Emmaus, that He went into the house to tarry with them, sat down, broke bread, blessed it, and gave it to them. On another occasion He is seen in company with an assembly of the disciples; and when they were terrified, He said unto them,

Why are ye troubled? . . . Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have {Luke 24:38, 39}.

To give further proof of His real humanity in resurrection, He asked them for something to eat; and

they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb, and He took, and did eat before them {Luke 24:42, 43}.

And more than that: He showed them from the Scriptures that it behoved Him to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. Lastly, we see Him leading the disciples out as far as to Bethany, as a man would lead his dearly-loved children or companions, step

by step, and then He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. Thus strikingly does this beautiful gospel present Jesus the Son of God in His perfect humanity.

The gospel by John is more striking still in its difference. It goes further back than any other part of Scripture -- to the Word who in the beginning was with God, and was God. That blessed One is also presented to us as

the Word made flesh {see John 1:14},
the Son of God {John 1:34},
the Lamb of God {John 1:36},
the King of Israel {John 1:49},
the Messiah,
the Life {John 11:25, 14:6},

and

the Light {John 8:12}.

He is also set forth as the Life-giver, the Quickener of the dead, the Resurrection, and as the one who will execute all judgment, because He is the Son of man. In this precious gospel, where the business of the evangelist is to speak of Him who came to reveal the Father, we find that when He had been virtually rejected by Israel, He calls His eleven together, and unfolds to them the wondrous depths of blessing of the 14th, 15th, and 16th chapters. Then He utters the beautiful prayer of the 17th chapter, the concluding words of which are,

And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it:
that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them,
and I in them {John 17:26}.

So also at the end of this gospel, we find that the Lord Jesus, when risen from the dead, presents Himself to His disciples as the minister of peace, and again declares the Father. He showed unto them His hands and His side, and said,

Peace be unto you {John 20:21}.

To Mary He said,

Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God {John 20:17}.

In concluding this hasty sketch of the different lines of instruction given in the four gospels, allow me to point out that in their termination Matthew presents Christ to us as the risen man, but still on the earth. I mean, he gives no account of His ascension. Mark sets Him before us as risen, ascended, and sitting on the right hand of God. Luke concludes with an account of Christ risen, ascended, and promising the gift of the Holy Ghost. John's gospel goes a step further still. There we have Christ risen, ascended, breathing on His disciples the Holy Ghost, and giving testimony of His coming again. So much for the distinct lines of teaching that each gospel presents to us. We must remember, that in this, as well as every part of God's Word, there is a fulness of divine teaching which is to us unsearchable. What I have tried to show is, that in each gospel a distinct line of truth is manifest; and I believe that no person can have even a superficial understanding of the four gospels, who does not see that the four evangelists present the Lord to us under the different aspects we have considered.

Enough has been said, I trust, to show why we should expect peculiar instruction in Matthew as to the kingdom. Let us now turn

to it. In the first chapter we have Christ traced as the legal heir to the throne of David. Jesus is born of a woman; He is really born

King of the Jews {Matt. 2:2}.

His genealogy is therefore traced from Abraham and David to Joseph, His reputed father, to show the royal line of succession, and that Jesus was legal heir to the throne of David. The whole of the particulars are detailed with striking beauty.

The second chapter shows us the condition, the sinful condition, in which the people of the Jews were; for when Herod and all Jerusalem heard that this child was born in Bethlehem, they were all troubled instead of being filled with joy. But it may be well to ask, Is it not the same thing that troubles people now? Some seem never more troubled than when Christ is solemnly and personally preached to them. They cannot bear being spoken to about the love of Christ. This shows the enmity of the heart. It was exactly the same with Herod, though he had professed to be a worshiper. The enmity so wrought in him, that after a time he issued an edict, by which he thought to include the infant Savior, ordering all the children from two years old and under in the land of Israel to be slain. However, he did not succeed. To fulfil the Scripture Joseph was commanded to take the young child down into Egypt, because it was written,

Out of Egypt have I called my Son {Matt. 2:15}.

Thus God overrules man's wickedness to accomplish His own purposes. If we do not see that, my Christian friends, we shall be at a loss to understand much of the Scriptures. I repeat, that God overrules man's wickedness to carry out His own purposes. Did He not do so at the cross, where man's wickedness in putting to death the Son of His love was overruled to carry out His own blessed purpose of eternal redemption? Did He not overrule too the rejection of Messiah and the kingdom to fulfil His own eternal purposes and counsels as to us?

In the midst of this sinful state of the nation that I have referred to, a person was raised up who lived outside the people as a separated man. He could not sympathise with the sinful nation. He was full of the Holy Ghost. He lived on locusts and wild honey, and was clad with camel's hair. He was the Lord's messenger. In due time he is led by Jehovah to give forth this cry,

Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand {Matt. 3:2}.

This was John the Baptist. Now observe here that God thus publishes, not that the kingdom *is* come, but that the kingdom was *at hand*. That is, that God was ready to bring in the kingdom, but that a change must be wrought in the minds of the people before they could have it. He cannot have a kingdom of thieves and murderers, of drunkards and idolaters. No, He could not acknowledge a kingdom of that sort. There must be a thorough change of mind -- true repentance, and then He would set up the kingdom. Now what was the effect of John's cry? The effect was that many came to him to be baptized; but John was thrown into prison, and was at last put to death. The people went out to be baptized in crowds. They said, "We want the kingdom"; and that is just what people are about now. They say, "Let us go to glory by all means; but we must have the pleasures of sin too." But God says, "I cannot have you on such terms. You must repent." No one therefore could have the blessing except there be a change of mind. John preached the baptism of repentance. "Repent of your

sins, and be baptized.” But did they repent? No, they wanted the kingdom as they were. John therefore called them a

generation of vipers {Matt. 3:7}.

And so it is in the present day. You ask people if they are going to glory, and they will answer, “I hope I shall go to glory.” But what is the truth? They are hugging their sins; they love the pleasures of sin; they have never repented before God; there has not been a change of mind. John was faithful, and suffered for it.

When Jesus heard that John was cast into prison, He began to preach, saying,

Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand {Matt. 4:17}.

Now what must have been the effect of these words on intelligent Jews? Let us look at some of their Scriptures. In Dan. 2:44 we have,

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

In Dan. 7:13, 14;

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

In Deut. 11:21:

That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth.

Turn also to Isa. 11:1-9:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of His roots: and the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears: but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Read also the last verse of the last Psalm.

Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord (Psa. 150:6).

I might, if time would permit, multiply quotations of a similar kind to show what an intelligent Jew must have understood when

he heard that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He knew that the kingdom of which the Old Testament prophets prophesied would be a kingdom of blessing -- a kingdom of power -- a kingdom in which

the knowledge of the Lord should cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea {see Isa. 11:9},

and

when all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest {see Heb. 8:11}.

But observe that the Lord added something to John’s testimony. He preached the same words --

Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand {Matt. 4:17},

but He also gave some signs to signify that He was the Messiah. For instance, He cast out devils. We read in the fourth chapter of Matthew:

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and He healed them {Matt. 4:23, 24}.

This was enough to show them, if they had eyes to see,

that He was the Messiah, and able to set up the kingdom, because we are told in the thirteenth chapter of Zechariah that one characteristic of the promised kingdom,

the day of the Lord,

will be, that He

will cause the unclean spirit to pass out of the land {Zech. 13:2}.

Jesus showed, by casting out devils, that He could cast the unclean spirit out. The presence, too, of evil spirits in Israel showed how unfit the nation was for God.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew give us what is called the Sermon on the mount -- a discourse which presents the principles on which Christ could set up His kingdom, and on which He will set it up by-and-by. The very first words that He utters are,

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven {Matt. 5:3}.

Again,

Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth {Matt. 5:5}.

It does not say that they shall inherit heaven, but inherit the earth. Then, further on, we read that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees -- that is, practically. They must not manifest the hypocrisy of being outwardly blameless, while inwardly full of uncleanness. There must be a practical righteousness exceeding that for the kingdom of God; and in the sixth chapter the instruction is followed up by,

Take heed that ye do not your alms [or fast] before men, to be seen of them {Matt. 6:1}.

As to prayer, He gives them a form of prayer fitted for disciples that were on kingdom ground -- for disciples who had not, as we have, the Holy Ghost, and the blessed truth of an accomplished redemption. This prayer is commonly called the Lord's Prayer. It was given to disciples, as I have said, who were on kingdom-ground. It was perfect for its kind, and in its suitability to such. There is no mention of the name of Jesus in it. There is no acknowledgment of the Holy Ghost in it. There is no drawing nigh to God through the atoning work of Christ in it. God is acknowledged as their Father in heaven, because they were children by regeneration; and it is asked that His kingdom may come -- that is, that it might be set up on earth. But when our Lord concludes His ministry, after His rejection by Israel, you will find, on turning to the sixteenth chapter of John, He says,

Hitherto have ye asked nothing *in my name* {John 16:24};

and insists, both here and in the fourteenth chapter, on the importance and blessedness of asking the Father in His name. He said,

Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full {John 16:24};

and associates all this with the hope of His coming for them, to take them to the Father's house. He instructs them also that He is going to be put to death, and will rise again from the dead -- that He will leave the world and go to the Father; and assures them that whatsoever they ask in His name, He will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. In the eighth chapter of Romans we are told also,

We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered {Rom. 8:26}.

The Holy Ghost, then, is the power of prayer. He leads us to pray in the name of Jesus. The power of prayer is not found in saying over a form of prayer, however truthful it may be. It consists in the Holy Ghost giving utterance to the heart through the name and blood of Jesus, who is now risen and ascended to God's right hand. People find fault with us sometimes that we do not formally use this prayer of the disciples, because they do not see what an amazing change has taken place, and do not understand the difference between being on kingdom-ground and on the ground of the Church of God. Since it was spoken Christ has died, the veil has been rent; Jesus is above, having entered into heaven by His own blood; and the Holy Ghost has come down to dwell in us. We cannot find fault with people taking up some of the sentiments expressed in the prayer. But surely *we* who are in Christ cannot say,

Forgive us our debts, *as* we forgive our debtors {Matt. 6:12}.

This was a saying which would be quite consistent for those who were on ground where righteousness ruled; but now, while

grace reigns through righteousness {see Rom. 5:21},

we are to forgive all, whether they forgive us or not. We are to love our enemies, and bless them that curse us; in short, to forgive as God in Christ has forgiven us. We now have God's forgiveness solely on the ground of Christ's atoning work. The perfection of that prayer for the disciples in their then condition as on kingdom-ground, prior to the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, cannot be disputed. The mistake with Christians is, that they get away from Christ -- from the

ground of the Church of God -- the true grace of God, wherein we stand, and go back to principles of the kingdom. They do not, therefore, get on in their souls, or get clear of the world.

The eighth chapter of Matthew opens with our Lord coming down from the mountain; and it appears that the first thing He sees is a man coming to Him who is a leper. This was remarkable, because it showed the degraded condition into which the nation had sunk. It showed that the nation had so far departed from God that, although in the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus an ordinance had been given for cleansing the leper, there was evidently no care for God's glory about it. It was just a sample of what the nation was. Now mark the ways of Jesus. He stretches out His hand and touches him. Whoever touched a leper before without getting defiled? He does not send him to the ordinance in Leviticus, but says,

Be thou clean {Matt. 8:3};

and when the man becomes clean, which was "immediately," He says, Go to the high priest, and show him that you have been cleansed, and offer the offering according to the law of Moses. Now what ought to have been the result of this most beautiful action of the blessed Lord? Why it ought to have been this, that the priest would have come to Him at once, and said, "You must have come from God. There was never such a thing known before in Israel as a leper cleansed immediately and simply by a word." But instead of this, there seems to have been no response. When the Lord sent this cleansed leper to the priest, it was like knocking at the door of the nation; the same way as a foreigner would knock at the door of this nation, if he sent a message to the prime minister. But the Scripture is silent as to any answer. The next thing consequently is that the Lord meets a Gentile. The case of the miraculous cure of the leper showed Christ's readiness to heal the leprous nation, and His power to bring them into immediate blessing. The miracle that follows shows that, although the Jews rejected the Messiah, there was blessing in His heart ready to flow out to the Gentiles. And let us never forget that the way we get blessing from Christ is through the poor Jews having rejected Him. We are told that when Jesus entered into Capernaum,

there came unto Him a centurion, beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented {Matt. 8:5, 6}.

The answer of Jesus was,

I will come and heal him {Matt. 8:7}.

But the man says, You need not come, but speak the word: your word is quite enough. For I am a centurion, and have soldiers under me:

and I say to his man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it {Matt. 8:9}.

You have therefore only to *speak the word*, Lord, and my servant will be healed. Well, the Lord did speak the word; the servant was healed; and to those who followed Him Jesus said,

I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel {Matt. 8:10}.

A most important declaration, because the mission of Christ was unto Israel.

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not {John 1:11}.

Matthew writes as if up to the twelfth chapter the Lord's works and ministry were entirely confined to Israel. I might go through the eighth chapter as giving further instruction of the same kind, but I pass on to the next, where we see another very striking case. A further appeal is made to the consciences of those around that Jesus was able to bring in the kingdom of blessing on the earth, of which the prophets had prophesied.

The ninth chapter is introduced by a paralytic man being brought to Jesus. The leper showed the filthy condition of the nation; this palsied man sets forth its helpless condition. His presence elicited a strange sound from Jesus. He said,

Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee {Matt. 9:2}.

What a statement! What gracious, what wonderful words! But the unbelieving people were alarmed. They began to say within themselves,

This man blasphemeth.

Now mark our Lord's reply.

And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house {Matt. 9:3-6}.

What is the meaning of these words? How is it possible for any one to give an intelligent explanation of them who does not understand in some measure the truth of the kingdom? When the Lord's testimony to Israel as coming to His own is seen, then it becomes simple enough. Here the Lord connects together two things -- the healing of disease and the forgiveness of sins. If you turn to the one hundred and third Psalm, you will find there a text that is often used, but perhaps seldom understood. It is the third verse:

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases {Psa. 103:3}.

This is clearly a millennial psalm. It opens with praise to Jehovah for the blessings of the kingdom. Now you see why the Lord connects the two things, -- the healing of disease with the forgiveness of sins, -- and also in what sense it is used by David in this kingdom psalm. This psalm will not have its accomplishment till the millennium; and then the song of the people of Israel will be,

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth *all thine iniquities*; who *healeth all thy diseases* {Psa. 103:1-3}.

If you turn also to the thirty-third chapter of Isaiah, you will find in the last verse --

The inhabitant shall not say, [speaking of millennial times,] *I am sick*: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity {Isa. 33:24}.

Thus the kingdom will be characterized by two things -- the forgiveness of sins, and healing of bodily disease. The gospel now preached tells us that the believer's sins are forgiven; that he is reconciled to God, through faith, by the blood of Jesus; that He is a justified man. But the gospel does not touch bodily disease; so that a man having bodily illness when receiving Christ for his

Savior may get worse as to health of body, sink, and die, though able fully to rejoice in the forgiveness of sins. How can this teaching of our Lord possibly admit of any other explanation than that the Lord was here appealing to the consciences of the people of Israel? Let us not forget, then, that the kingdom will be characterised by these two things. Jehovah's people will be all taught of God, and blessed by Him soul and body, so that they will heartily sing --

Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.

We are to understand, therefore, by what we find in the beginning of the ninth chapter of Matthew, that our Lord is there presenting Himself to Israel in a still more significant manner, as able to accomplish the two things -- the forgiveness of sins and the healing of bodily disease. They ought by these things to have known that He must be the Messiah.

In the tenth chapter, the Lord calls His twelve apostles, and sends them forth to preach. He said to them,

Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead {Matt. 10:5-8}.

Notice here that their commission was limited to Israel. They were not even to enter into a Samaritan city. Connected with this, they were to preach

the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

With this verbal testimony, with a view of making a still stronger appeal, they had to show that Jesus had given to them the power to cleanse lepers, and to raise the dead. In thus sending them out, observe, in the 23rd verse, that our Lord says,

I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come {Matt. 10:23}.

We know that their mission was interrupted; they did not go very far with their testimony. The twenty-fourth chapter teaches us that this same ministry touching the kingdom will be resumed after the Church is gone. Christ has gone up into heaven, the Holy Ghost has come down, and is now forming the Church, the body of Christ; and when the body is complete, we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then this testimony will go out again, and it will take a larger course. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew it is stated that

this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached as a witness in all the world [the civilized world], and then shall the end come (see Matt. 24:14).

Observe, it is

the gospel of the kingdom.

Be careful to distinguish between the gospel of the kingdom, and what Paul calls in the Acts of the Apostles,

the gospel of the grace of God {Acts 20:24}.

In the eleventh chapter of Matthew we have two remarkable statements as to the kingdom of heaven, which, I believe, are often misunderstood. One referring to John the Baptist, where, after it is stated that there was none greater born of women, it is added,

Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he {Matt. 11:11}.

How do some interpret this? They say that the kingdom of heaven is the Church, and that the least in the Church is greater than John; but this is very unsatisfactory. The kingdom of heaven, as we have seen, is not the Church. In the kingdom there will be such distinctions as least and greatest; but there are no such distinctions in the Church. There are various gifts; but no such idea as least and greatest. We cannot find such words in the writings of the apostles applied to the Church. There are some who have greater faith than others; there are also apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers, and so on; but, I repeat, not least and greatest. The statement, I believe, means, that although John the Baptist had up to that time been the greatest that had been born of a woman, yet in the millennial kingdom the glory will be so marvelous, and the blessing so beyond anything that could have been conceived by man, that the place of privilege John had will be inferior to the least amongst those who will be in the enjoyment of that time of blessing.

The other expression is in the twelfth verse.

From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force (Matt. 11:12).

That is, Christ preached that the kingdom of heaven was at hand; and if a man, whether he were a fisherman, a publican, or any other person, believed the message, he had to press through difficulties, to force his way against persons and prejudices, in order to take kingdom-ground. Everybody being against him, he had to take his place in this relationship to Christ by force. This was the last time, according to Matthew, that Christ mentioned the kingdom, (in the sense of referring to the kingdom which the prophets prophesied would be set up,) before He begins to give the nation up.

The twelfth chapter of Matthew gives us a most remarkable incident in connection with Christ's ministry of the kingdom. We are told that

the Pharisees went out, and held a council against Christ, how they might destroy Him {Matt. 12:14}.

Notwithstanding all His patience and love for His ancient people, they went about to destroy Him. Then you find that Christ pronounces them to be a

generation of vipers {Matt. 12:34},

and

an adulterous generation {Matt. 12:39},

whom the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South will rise up in judgment to condemn, because He was greater than Jonas and greater than Solomon. He then puts before them the story of the unclean spirit, to show the condition in which they were, and that they would get worse and worse; and when, as we find at the close of the twelfth chapter, some one said unto Him,

Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee {Matt. 12:47},

He asks,

Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? {Matt. 12:48}.

He begins to shake off, if I may so say, the acknowledgment of Jewish relationship, and feels Himself to be the rejected one. He will no longer deal with people because of their Abrahamic relationship; but any would now be blessed who received His word. He had come with the testimony that the kingdom of heaven

was at hand, and plainly showed in various ways that He was able to set it up; but now He opens His arms wide, and says,

Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother {Matt. 12:50}.

So that He goes out now beyond the limits of Israel. Therefore He goes out of the house, takes the place of a sower of seed by the wayside -- sowing the seeds of His truth broadcast, and no longer confines His ministry to Israel. This was a remarkable change. *From that time*, because of Israel's unbelief, the kingdom of heaven assumes a different character.

We come now to the thirteenth chapter, which presents truths of great practical importance to every Christian. Here we find two remarkable verses, which I will read as a kind of preface to the parables. In answer to the disciples, who asked His reasons for speaking in parables, after He had given the parable of the sower, He said, in the eleventh verse,

Because it is given unto you to know *the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*, but to them it is not given (Matt. 13:11).

We have not had the word "mysteries" before in connection with the kingdom of heaven. The testimony of the prophets as to the kingdom had no mystery about it; but it is a result of Christ being rejected by Israel. Therefore you will observe, in the 35th verse, that all this was kept secret till this time. Jesus said,

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter *things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world* (Matt. 13:35).

We are thus prepared to expect that the Lord would bring out some things in these parables which had been kept secret since the foundation of the world. And so it was. We cannot find anything like them in the Scriptures that came before. Some have not improperly called this peculiar condition of things, the kingdom of heaven in mystery, by way of distinguishing it from the kingdom of heaven of which prophets prophesied. In the kingdom spoken of by the prophets there was to be no devil working; the unclean spirit would be cast out; no unholy people: the sinner was to be accursed, and iniquity not tolerated. But now, in consequence of Christ's rejection by Israel, the kingdom of heaven has taken this mysterious form, and it is still going on. It refers to every one who professes to acknowledge Christ.

In connection with the instruction given by our Lord on the subject, He sets before us seven parables.

The first parable is that of the sower sowing the seed -- the word of God. I will not occupy time with any remarks on that. Strictly speaking this parable does not show us the kingdom, but the new position taken by the Lord, of sowing the good seed everywhere, and the results.

The next parable is that of the wheat and the tares, in which

the kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way {Matt. 13:24, 25}.

Observe, that the tares are not judged till the end of the age. It is the kingdom of heaven taking this mysterious form that the prophets never prophesied of, and is going on at the present

moment. It commenced with the good seed, causing wheat to spring up; but while the Christians were drowsy and unwatchful the enemy came in, and introduced bad seed -- wicked people. We see precisely the same thing in the most solemn and important epistle of Jude. In that epistle we are told that

certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness {Jude 4}.

In this parable we find that the tares continue until the end of the age -- until Christ Himself comes in judgment to deal with the kingdom. Jude also, in looking at the same thing, traces this evil working, and shows that it will go on until Christ comes with ten thousand of His saints, taking vengeance upon them. Pause for a moment, my beloved friends. Does this look like the world being converted by the preaching of the gospel? It is positively stated that the tares are the children of the wicked one, that they are mixed with the wheat, and that they are not to be rooted up. It is also declared that they will continue in the field till the Lord comes in judgment and deals with them. Can anything be clearer?

The next parable is that of the mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds. So the work of the Lord was the most insignificant thing in the world as to outward appearance when it began. It consisted of a few people in an upper room, whom nobody cared about. But from this small seed a great tree has grown up -- a gigantic thing in the world's eyes. A tree is a symbol of power in the earth. This is what the Lord here prophesied the kingdom of heaven would be -- it would lose its separate and spiritual qualities, and become a great thing in the earth. But observe that the tree becomes so large, that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches. The fowls, as we read in a previous parable, are typical of Satan, the wicked one. So that we thus see the devil can now really find a resting-place in that which professes the name of Christ. The fact is manifest to every discerning mind.

Then follows the parable of the leaven, in which, you will remember, we are told that all will eventually be leavened. A woman is represented as introducing leaven into pure flour, and the leaven working in the flour soon affects the whole mass. The question arises, What is the meaning of this parable? Now, I confess that it seems to me astonishing that any Christian man, if he prayerfully read the Bible, should have any question as to this parable showing the quick and sure working of principles of corruption among professing Christians, till the whole mass becomes influenced by it. In every place where leaven is used in Scripture, it means something bad. This parable, then, shows us the introduction and working of evil among those professedly bearing the name of Christ; it began to work early, and the thing is going on still, and will go on till all is leavened. When Christ comes and removes His saints, what a mass of corruption ostensibly bearing His name will be left behind! It is a matter for deep thankfulness that none of the true, dear children of God can perish. How plainly this parable also shows that the promise of universal blessing on the earth cannot have its fulfilment till after judgment!

Having uttered these four parables, the Lord, we are told in the thirty-sixth verse, goes into a house, and the disciples came unto Him, Saying,

Declare unto us the parable of the tares (Matt. 13:36).

The Lord, therefore, expounds the parable to them. He says,

He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one {Matt. 13:37, 38}.

I call attention to a point which, although mentioned once before in these lectures, yet it seems to me desirable to refer to it again. It is, Are we sufficiently aware of the fact that it is the business of Satan to make people profess the name of Christ without having Christ in their hearts? It is to be feared that many Christians in mistaken zeal are helping this on. Every now and then you hear it said "We must raise the people." I ask, Raise them to what? How can you raise a dead man? He must have life. He must know Christ, and be in Christ. If you could bring a man into Christ, that would be the only way of really raising him. But it is said we must try to raise him. What is meant is that we must first make a tare of him. We must get him to give up this and that sin, and to profess Christ, go to sacrament, attend to religious ordinances, and all that; and then we may have some hope of making a Christian of him. But this parable does not suppose that a single tare was ever converted unto wheat, but rather that they both go on to the harvest. The tares will then be burned. Therefore the Lord went on to say,

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world (or age) {Matt. 13:40}.

Now, I need not tell many of you that the word here translated "world," really means "age." The word is not *κοσμος*, which is always translated world, but it is *αιωνος*. In the sentence, "The field is the world," it is *κοσμος*, and means world; but in the sentence, "So shall it be in the end of the world," it is *αιωνος* and means age. Then we are told,

The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire {Matt. 13:41, 42}.

This is not the Lord coming *for* us; we shall have been caught up to meet Him in the air before that. The subject of our Lord's teaching here is not the Church, or the Christian's hope; the subject is, the kingdom in its present form, and its coming end in judgment. Christ is coming to judge this great thing that bears His name. As Enoch prophesied,

The Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon the ungodly {see Jude 14 and 15}.

Those of whom I have been speaking are some of the ungodly; and Christ will come to execute judgment upon these living wicked, and leave a people for blessing upon the earth. The wicked will be removed, and the blessed ones left.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun {Matt. 13:43}.

In this way He will introduce the kingdom of which the prophets prophesied, when in a great measure the will of God will be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

The Lord having given to the disciples the explanation they asked for, narrates three other parables -- the treasure, the pearl of great price, and the net cast into the sea. He says,

The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field: the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field {Matt. 13:44}.

The treasure evidently means the redeemed, I believe, more than the Church, -- all the redeemed, whether for the heavens or the earth. The treasure was hid in a field, and Christ has bought the field by His redemption work. He did not wear the crown of thorns in vain. That mark of God's curse on the earth for man's sin found a place upon His spotless brow, and the blood of the cross tells us the price even of creation's redemption. He bought the field. And, by-and-by,

instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree; instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree {Isa. 55:13},

to the praise and the glory of His blessed name. He has, then, at the cost of all that He had, bought the field for the sake of the treasure. The world, therefore, belongs to Christ by redemption; it is His by right. He is the Author and Creator of all things, as well as the Savior of the world.

The pearl of great price is doubtless the Church looked at in its unity, not as the mystery. That was not revealed till afterwards. There is a hymn somewhere which begins,

"I've found the pearl of greatest price,"

as if that *pearl* was Christ. It is unaccountable how some have so interpreted Scripture. There never was a greater mistake, my beloved friends. We have not given anything for Christ. Blessed be His name, it is quite the reverse, -- Christ has given everything for us. Do you not see how simple this is? The pearl was loved by Christ when it lay hidden at the bottom of the sea covered with mud and filthiness. But Christ saw it. His heart was set on the Church; but to have it, and bring it back to Himself, He must go down under the waves and billows of God's wrath. And down He went; He sunk as it were to the bottom, and brought up the Church in risen life, and will present it to Himself a glorious Church, a pearl bought indeed at a great price, the price of the Savior's blood. This doubtless refers to the Church; but, I repeat, the mystery of the Church was not known until it was revealed to Paul.

Our Lord also relates another parable--that of the good fish and the bad. There is a difference between his parable and that of the wheat and tares, which I cannot enter into to-night. I may just remark that it also shows (and it is a most important point) that the judgment that will be exercised by the Lord when He comes in manifested glory will be not to take away the good and leave the bad, but to take away the bad and leave the good. These parables teach us that Christendom is going on to judgment. Christ will take out of His kingdom

them which do iniquity {Matt. 13:41};

He will separate the wicked from among the just. I call attention to this, because these parables do not speak of the Lord coming *for* us. When the Lord comes *for* us, the good are taken away, and the bad are left behind for judgment; but when He comes *with* us in flaming fire for judgment, then He takes the bad away, and leaves the good for blessing on the earth.

Well, dear friends, when Christ has taken away by judgment all the wicked, -- put all enemies under His feet, -- what will be the result? We shall have the time of predicted blessing, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea. In the twenty-sixth chapter of Isaiah and the ninth verse we are told,

When God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness {Isa. 26:9}.

What I have been endeavouring to show is, that the kingdom will be set up by the judgment of the Lord being executed upon the wicked. In the next verse the words are,

Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness {Isa. 26:10}.

Now God is showing favour -- preaching the forgiveness of sins, and we see that they will not learn righteousness by it; but we know that the time is coming when people will not say,

Know the Lord; for all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest {see Heb. 8:11}.

This state of things will characterize the kingdom, but we are nowhere told that the gospel will fill the world with fruit. To suppose it is surely a mistake, and I may add a terrible hindrance to understanding a great deal of divine truth. The earth is to be filled with blessing; but what saith the Scripture? The answer is plain. In the twenty-seventh of Isaiah we are told that

Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit {Isa. 27:6}.

So we see that restored and blessed Israel will fill the world with fruit; not the Church, -- not the gospel, -- but Israel. The Lord still further taught His disciples in the fifty-second verse that every one who is instructed in the kingdom of heaven brings out of his treasure things new and old -- the *new* things being the mysteries of this chapter, the *old*, the things of the kingdom prophesied by prophets.

Thus we see in the teaching of this chapter the real condition of what now bears the name of Christ on the earth. Let us not forget that the field is *the world*, not *the Church*; and that both good and bad professing Christ's name -- wheat and tares -- will continue mingled together till the end of the age. The principles of the Church are not contemplated here; but, in point of time, since Christ uttered these sayings, He has died for sinners, was raised from the dead, has ascended into heaven, has sent down the Holy Ghost to form the Church the body of Christ, and when complete it will be removed before the end of the age. So that between the sowing of the seed and the end of the age there is room for the Church to be formed, and caught up to meet Christ in the air. The wheat *now* belongs to the Church of God. A true believer therefore, *at this time*, is both in the Church and in the kingdom. A mere professor is in the kingdom, and does not belong to the Church. After the Church is gone, an elect Jew will belong to the kingdom, and not to the Church.

The remaining parables in this gospel have for the most part the same termination of blessing and judgment. It is well to notice, however, after all that we have seen of the Lord's patience and rejection, He still goes on in faithful testimony and love to the nation.

In the 14th chapter the Lord, deeply affected by the assassination of His honored servant John, goes *into a desert place*. This speaks to our hearts. But He still manifests love to the nation of Israel, in feeding the multitude, and thus gives a still further sign of His Messiahship. It is also repeated in the 15th chapter. He feeds thousands on a few loaves and fishes, according to the prophetic words of the 132nd Psalm:

I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread {Psa. 132:15}.

They thus had further testimony as to the presence and power of Him who was able to fulfil the Scripture as to the kingdom, to say nothing of His wondrous grace and compassion in healing all the sick that were brought unto Him. All was, however, unheeded by the people. In the 15th chapter the Lord exposes the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees, who were among the leading men at Jerusalem, in having made *the word of God* of none effect by their tradition, and in honoring God with their lips while their hearts were far from Him; but He accepts and honors the faith of a poor Gentile, who takes the place of a dog before Him. This is very significant, and strongly intimates the Lord's purpose.

The sixteenth chapter is very important in a dispensational sense. The Lord pronounces the Pharisees and Sadducees to be hypocrites,
an adulterous generation,
and

left them, and departed {Matt. 16:3, 4}.

Then, on Peter's confession of Him as

the Christ, the Son of the living God {Matt. 16:16},

we have two things brought out for the first time. 1st.

Upon this rock I will build my Church {Matt. 16:18}.

2nd. His sufferings, death, and resurrection. As to the first point, it shows not only how distinct the Church is from the kingdom, but also that, being rejected by Israel, another thing would be built, according to the eternal purpose of God, that had no existence before -- the Church. In reference to the second point, not only is it certainly foretold by Christ that the Jews, instead of repenting and having the kingdom, would hate Him more and more until they put Him to death, but also, when the Church is spoken of, we are told,

from that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples that He *must* go unto Jerusalem . . . suffer . . . be killed, and be raised again the third day {Matt. 16:21}.

The calling of the Church being *heavenly*, the blessings being *spiritual*, and her position *union* with Christ risen, the moment He mentioned *the Church*, He *began* to show that He *must* be rejected and put to death by the Jews, and be raised again from the dead. *Before this* there is no mention of His death; no one could have gathered from His ministry about the kingdom that He was going to die; for

He came unto His own {John 1:11},

as able to set up the kingdom, and He would have gathered them together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, but they would not. God thus permitted wicked and apostate Israel to do their own will in rejecting and killing Jesus, to carry out His own purpose of providing an offering and a sacrifice for sin, that the children of God might be gathered together in one, and that *the nation* might be righteously and permanently established on the ground of redemption. We therefore find *after this* a picture of the kingdom in power in the 17th chapter. The two pillars of the nation -- Moses and Elias are there in glory with Jesus; and, from another evangelist, we learn that the all-absorbing subject of conversation is the death of Jesus. This will, doubtless, be the case

in the *earthly* department of the coming kingdom, as well as the heavenly. The universal cry will be --

"For ever be the glory given
To thee, O Lamb of God;
Our every joy, on earth *in heaven*,
We owe it to *thy blood*."

Our time, beloved friends, has expired, or we might have pursued our meditations on "the kingdom of heaven" for several chapters further in this precious gospel. Enough, however, has, I trust, been said to call attention to the subject. It is lamentable to think how eagerly principles of Judaism are being embraced by Christians, so as not only to destroy spiritual-mindedness, undermine the truth of the accomplished redemption and all-prevalent priesthood of Christ, but to lower the tone of souls, foster worldliness, and keep in ignorance and bondage dear children of God. We may be sure that no Christian will really live above the world and worldly religiousness, who does not apprehend his union with a rejected, risen, and ascended Christ.

Lecture 7: The Reign of Christ, And the Eternal State

And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled (Col. 1:20, 21).

Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him (Eph. 1:9, 10).

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea (Rev. 20:5-15; 21:1).

What a blessed thing it is, beloved friends, to know that Christ died for the ungodly! though it is only when the soul has apprehended that fact for its own salvation, that it is in a condition to learn the glories and unfathomable depths of that finished work. Scripture, however, not only gives us general statements, but special statements concerning the sacrificial work of Christ. For instance; we read in the eleventh chapter of John that it was expedient that one man should die for the people, that the whole nation perish not; and

that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that He should also gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad {John 11:51, 52}.

I refer to this to show that Christ is spoken of as dying for *the nation*. When the apostle is speaking of the Church of God in the epistle to the Ephesians, he says,

Christ . . . loved *the Church*, and gave Himself for it {Eph. 5:25}.

And when the thought is presented to us of creation being delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God, we cannot but think of Jesus in humiliation wearing a crown of thorns, -- which were set in the earth as a mark of God's curse, -- thus showing us that it is through Him alone creation will be brought into its promised blessing. And when, further, we consider the fact that *the whole world* will yet be filled with blessing, so that every creature shall be blessing and praising God, and

the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea {see Isa. 11:9},

we have the key to it all in the cross of Christ; for He is presented to us in Scripture as *the Savior of the world*. It is when the world is full of blessing that the text will have its evident application --

The Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world {1 John 4:14}.

We shall find, on looking at the Scriptures carefully, that an immense deal of the Old Testament yet remains to be fulfilled. If we only think of the first prophecy in the Bible, where God told Satan that he should bruise the heel of the woman's Seed, and that the Seed would bruise his head, it is clear that it has not had its full accomplishment. But it must be fulfilled. The Seed of the woman shall yet bruise the serpent's head. Some may imagine that this has been done by the work of Christ on the cross. But it is not so; for the apostle in writing to the saints at Rome says,

The God of peace *shall* bruise Satan under your feet *shortly* {Rom. 16:20}.

It was then a prospective thing, and so it is still. We are also told that

your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour {1 Pet. 5:8}.

Perhaps the second prophecy of Scripture was that of Enoch, which we find recorded in Jude:

Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied . . . saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly {Jude 14, 15}.

This has yet to be fulfilled. The third prophecy in Scripture perhaps, in point of date, was uttered by Job in the well-known passage of the nineteenth chapter --

I know that my redeemer liveth, and that *He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth* {Job 19:25}.

This, I need not say, has also to be fulfilled. The next prophetic statements we would notice in the ancient Scriptures are the promises to Abraham. In the twelfth chapter of Genesis we read,

In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed {Gen. 12:3};
and in the eighteenth chapter,

All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him {Gen. 18:18}.

These promises have yet to be accomplished. God is not blessing nations, as such, by the gospel through the seed of Abraham *now*. He is blessing people by calling them out of the nations; He is taking

out of the Gentiles a people for His name {see Acts 15:14};

so that when the Lord comes, those who are His will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and the nations, as such, will be left untouched. But in the reign of Christ, which we are now about to consider, we shall see that the nations will own Him, for He will be the Governor among the nations. Zechariah tells us,

many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and shall be my people {Zech. 2:11}.

Then those of

all the families of the earth {Zech. 14:15}

who will not own Jerusalem as the metropolis of blessing in the earth will receive a special judgment.

The Lord Jesus Christ is coming forth to fulfil the word of God concerning these things. Whether it be the Seed of the woman according to Moses, or to come with ten thousand of His saints according to Enoch, or the Redeemer to stand upon the earth according to Job, or as Abraham's seed, to be the Dispenser of blessing to all nations, Jesus is coming to fulfil all. You will find, in reading the Scriptures carefully, that judgment is always put before us as preceding the period of blessing coming upon the earth. There is no question that

the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea {see Isa. 11:9}.

There is not a doubt that the last Psalm will be fulfilled --

Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord {Psa. 150:6}

The fifth of Revelation must have its accomplishment, that every creature in heaven and on the earth, and under the earth, shall yet be blessing and praising Him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb. But that to which I want particularly to call attention is, that this period of blessedness is always presented to us in Scripture as preceded by terrible judgments. If we think of the ten kingdoms which are in connection with the Roman earth, we know that judgment will usher in the blessing. We read in the second chapter of Daniel, 34th and 35th verses:

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and

became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:34, 35).

Thus we see the whole earth filled with blessing through the terrible judgment of

the stone cut out without hands,

which is evidently Christ.

Israel, too, will be in the deepest trouble and sorrow, as we shall see by-and-by, many of whom will be cut off, before the remnant are brought into their expected blessing through Messiah's coming and deliverance. Look also at Christendom -- that which outwardly confesses the name of Christ; the tares are bound in bundles, and cast out of the kingdom, with all iniquity, in order that the promised blessing in the earth may be given. And you will remember, when we were lately considering the fact of the Lord coming out of heaven with all His saints, according to the 19th chapter of Revelation, we saw that His first act will be terrible judgment; He will take the beast and the false prophet, and cast them alive into the lake of fire; and then slay the kings and people, calling on all the birds of the air to feed upon the carcasses of these allies of this master-piece of Satan's iniquity. The Lord having thus, by the brightness of His glorious coming, judged at once in the most summary manner this intolerable iniquity, He will go on to judge and rule until all enemies are put under His feet. As we read in the second of Thessalonians --

The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel {2 Thess. 1:7, 8}.

Jude speaks of Him as

executing judgment on the ungodly {see Jude 15};

and the prophet Malachi, in his last chapter, says,

The day cometh that shall burn as an oven; . . . it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings {Mal. 4:1, 2}.

The sixty-third chapter of Isaiah opens with a picture of the Lord executing His righteous judgments upon living people on the earth:

Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come {Isa. 63:1-4}.

Now observe here, that with the

vengeance

we have also

mighty to save,

and

the year of my redeemed is come,

-- precisely the same as we saw in Malachi, that the Lord's judgment of the wicked will precede the blessing coming upon the earth. The forty-sixth Psalm evidently refers to the same point. It is the utterance of those who have made God their refuge and strength in a time of special trouble. They are sustained by trust in God. Therefore they will not fear, whatever judgments may come upon the earth. They have a secret spring of joy and blessing. They know that

there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: He uttered His voice, the earth melted. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations He hath made in the earth. He maketh war to cease unto the end of the earth; He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; He burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth {Psa. 46:4-10}.

The blessing will be very great. Satan will be bound. The twentieth chapter of Revelation opens with it in the first and second verses:

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years (Rev. 20:1, 2).

We can easily imagine what an immense difference this will make on the moral condition of the world. The Lord too will be reigning -- not only restraining evil, but positively filling the earth with blessing.

We may notice two things in relation to the reign of Christ. First, the judgment of the Lord on His enemies; secondly, the people of Israel brought to know Jesus as their Redeemer, through whom blessing will be extended to the nations. We have already noticed the teaching of Scripture as to the binding of Satan, and the judgment of the living wicked, and may advert to it again by-and-by. We will now, however, look a little at the bright side of the picture.

When the Jews see Jesus, and not before, like Thomas, they will say,

My Lord, and my God {John 20:28}.

Israel will therefore be converted by *sight*.¹¹ The sinner now is saved by *faith*.

Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed {John 20:29}.

It is when the Redeemer comes out of Sion that He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob. When God works again in the hearts of the people of Israel, a nation will be born at once. The Scriptures will then be fulfilled --

Thy children shall be all taught of the Lord {Isa. 54:13},

and

thy people also shall be all righteous {Isa. 60:21}.

It will be the

regeneration {Matt. 19:28}

when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory, referred to in Matt. 19. Then will the 133rd Psalm be fulfilled:

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: . . . as the dew of Hermon {Psa. 133:1-3}.

Israel will be made willing in the day of Christ's power, and will really be a Christian nation.¹² Those who expect the Jews as a nation to be converted before the personal coming of the Lord will be disappointed. When He comes again in power and great glory, He will put His ancient people in the enjoyment of that which was promised to Abraham and his seed. Not one iota shall fail. Israel shall be established in their land in rich blessing under the true David, and under the anti-typical Solomon. Solomon began his reign by taking vengeance on his enemies, and then brought the people into a higher character of power and glory than they ever knew before; and so the Lord Jesus, a greater than Solomon, shall first, by His great power, put His enemies under His feet, and then arise as the Sun of righteousness, and shine in brightness, and healing, and blessing upon His ancient people.

In giving, beloved friends, a hasty sketch to-night of the millennial reign of Christ, I shall only be able to touch on a few important points. But sure am I that if a soul only apprehend one of these divine truths as revealed in the Scriptures, it will be like taking up a link of a long golden chain, which will guide him from link to link until he is taught more fully the mind of the Lord, and the value of His prophetic word. Remember, beloved friends, I am not speaking fanciful or imaginary things to-night; I am not seeking to amuse the intellect with either poetry or fiction; I am presenting to you the word of the living God. Many in this room have proved the comfort and blessedness of these truths for many years, and our earnest wish is to extend to our beloved fellow Christians the same comfort we have realized, as connected with a proper understanding of these gracious revelations of God in the Scriptures.

From the first chapter of Colossians I read two verses, in which it appears we are taught, first, that Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross, and secondly, that the results of that work on the cross have both a present and a future application. As to its present application, we know that the person who believes is already reconciled to God; but observe that in the 20th verse it is not *persons* that are spoken of, but *things* which are to be reconciled. And so in the first chapter of the Ephesians it does not say, "to gather together all believers in one," though, as regards the Church, that would be true; but what the apostle is glorying in here is that God, who has so blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, has made known to us the mystery of His will,

11. {A more accurate way to understand this is to take into account that the godly Jewish remnant will be composed of those who are born of God, though they do not know acceptance and peace by Him. This acceptance and peace they will experience consequent upon Messiah's coming.}

12. {Likely, in penning such a phrase, the writer is thinking of the Jews following Christ in the millennium. However, the phrase tends to confuse Israel and the church. Besides, Scripture uses the word 'Christian' to describe saints *now*. Let us restrict its use to that.}

according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself, that He might gather together in one all *things* (mark, THINGS) in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, -- even in Him. When?

In the dispensation of the fulness of times {Eph. 1:10};

that is, I apprehend, when the times for many things will have fully come. Nothing can be more simple. Everything was made by Christ, and for Christ, both Colossians and Hebrews tell us; and when He takes to Himself His great power and reigns, it will be manifest that every department of the kingdom will be blessed through Christ, and be headed up in Christ.

There are four points to which I would like, as briefly as I can, to call attention in relation to the blessings of the millennial reign of Christ. The first is the position of the Church, and those saints who will reign with Christ. The second the glory, peace, and pre-eminence that Israel as a nation will occupy during the reign. The third, the blessing of the Gentile nations. The fourth, the deliverance of creation.

With regard to the Church of God, I have already, as far as the limits of one address would allow, entered into her coming glory. Her place in the kingdom will be association with Christ Himself, sharing His glory, and still being in holy and happy subjection. When He has brought everything into subjection to Himself, He will deliver up the kingdom to His Father, and God shall be all in all. The place of the Church in the kingdom is not on earth, but in the heavens.

As is the heavenly,

says the apostle,

such are they also that are heavenly {1 Cor. 15:48}.

It requires very little spiritual perception to see that heavenly people are one thing, and earthly people another. We are told that

the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another {1 Cor. 15:40};

both are spheres of glory, each having a department in the one kingdom -- Christ the center, Christ the source, Christ the glory and blessing beaming through all. He reigns *over* the nation of Israel, *we* reign *with* Christ. We have a beautiful little picture of millennial glory in the history of Joseph, as recorded in the 41st chapter of Genesis. Joseph, while separated from his brethren, married a Gentile wife. When exalted from the suffering of deep humiliation into the place of glory, he was enabled to bring his brethren into the fatness of the land of Egypt, and all the Egyptians were called on to

bow the knee {Gen. 41:43}

when Joseph drove through the land. Here we have in Joseph, with his wife by his side, a picture of Christ and the Church; in Joseph's brethren we have the sons of Israel, who had sold him, reconciled to Him, and brought into blessing, as Israel will be by-and-by; and in the Egyptians we have a picture of the nations who will yet bow the knee to Jesus. They will own Christ as the giver of all their blessings, as the Egyptians acknowledged they were indebted to Joseph for all the blessings they then enjoyed.

With regard to Israel, it is almost difficult to know to what part of the old Scriptures to turn first (the references to their future glory being so numerous), to show the peculiar blessedness of

their calling and expectation when they inhabit the land under the rule of the true David. But if we turn, in the first place, to the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, we shall see there one allusion.

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitudes of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall show forth the praises of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob. For brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron: I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended {Isa. 60:1-20}.

Now it is utterly impossible to apply this language to any other than the Jewish nation -- in fact, as we have seen, the prophet Isaiah addresses himself directly to them. The first words in this book are,

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem {Isa. 1:1}.

And when we find other parts of Scripture predicting a time of wonderful blessing for this ancient people, we cannot be surprised that the verses to which I have drawn attention should speak of the high character of the blessing and glory which they will enjoy in their own land. The temple will evidently be built prior to this, because, you will remember, the abomination that the man of sin sets up is in the holy place.

The children of Israel will be brought back to their own land in unbelief. They will attend outwardly to the earthly religiousness which characterizes Israel.

The false Messiah, the man of sin, will introduce himself among them through the power of Satan. The people will be bewitched by him. After some time he will thrust aside the daily sacrifice, and set up an idol -- the image that we were lately looking at in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation -- in the temple, and people will be compelled to fall down and worship

the man of sin {2 Thess. 2:3}.

The Lord will come and find this condition of things. Independently of judging

the man of sin,

He will bring the third part of His people through this scene of remarkable and unparalleled tribulation. He will cut off two-thirds in judgment, and bring the remaining third into their promised blessing in the land; then, as we find in the latter part of Ezekiel, the land will be afresh marked out, the temple be re-built according to the directions given there, though not on its former site, but at a considerable distance from Jerusalem. Living waters will go out from Jerusalem; they will know Christ to be their King, their true David; and they will realize all those wonderful glories on the earth -- glories so marvelous that it seems the terrestrial will be a counterpart of the glories of the celestial, the characteristics of the one being earthly, the characteristics of the other being heavenly. Jesus will

reign before His ancients gloriously {Isa. 24:23},

and Isa. 60 have its accomplishment,

Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee, &c. {Isa. 60:1}.

But with all this wondrous blessing, the condition of things will not be perfect. There will be *sin* and *curse*, and consequently *death*. There will be *old age* and *infirmity*. The sixty-fifth chapter of Isaiah tells us that

the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed {Isa. 65:20};

and the prophet Zechariah tells us, in the eighth chapter,

There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age {Zech. 8:4}.

Moreover, the millennial reign of Christ, which is called in the Old Testament the day of the Lord, and called also in the New Testament by the apostle Peter, in his third chapter of the second epistle,

the day of the Lord {2 Pet. 3:10},

and

the day of God {2 Pet. 3:12},¹³

will have its morning, its noon, and its evening, and will occupy a thousand years. The apostle, in the twentieth chapter of Revelation, says,

They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years {Rev. 20:4};

and the apostle Peter seems to confirm this when he says,

One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day {2 Pet. 3:8}.

It is evident that the blessings upon mankind will then be so great on the earth, that longevity will again be known; so that

there shall be no more thence an infant of days . . . for the child shall die an hundred years old {Isa. 65:20}.

It does not seem improbable that some may live through the whole of the thousand years.

The *morning* of this millennial age, as we have seen, will be ushered in with darkness, and sorrow, and wailing, -- with the putting of enemies under Christ's feet.

Every eye shall see Him, . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him {Rev. 1:7}.

It will be a day that will burn as an oven. But the *mid-day* will be characterized by peace, and unity, and rest. Fertility and fruitfulness will be marvelously increased. According to the prophet Amos,

The *plowman shall overtake the reaper*, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. *And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land* which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God {Amos 9:13-15}.

The prophet Micah also refers to this subject. He says in the fourth chapter and third verse,

He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and *they* shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it. . . . In that day, saith the Lord, will I assemble *her that halteth*, and I will gather *her that is driven out*, and *her that I have afflicted*; and I will make her that halted a *remnant*, and her that was cast off a *strong nation*: and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever {Micah 4:3-7}.

13. {Presently, it is "man's day" (1 Cor. 4:3). "Man's day" will end when the Gentile power of empire is crushed by Christ, the smiting stone (Dan. 2). The smiting stone becomes a great mountain, the millennial power of Christ during the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord begins with the appearing of Christ in glory and extends over the millennial period to the great white throne judgment. Then will begin "the day of God," the eternal state, when God shall be all in all. These three 'days' are sequential.}

The natural sun, too, shall shine with sevenfold light. And no wonder; for if he hid himself, and thus cast such solemn gloom around the cross of the blessed Lord when making atonement for sin, so that "there was darkness over the whole land from the sixth to the ninth hour; when He comes in glory, no wonder, I say, that the sun should shine forth with sevenfold lustre at the exaltation of that blessed Savior who was so humbled on the cross at Calvary. In the thirtieth chapter of Isaiah we find,

Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and *the light of the sun shall be sevenfold*, as the light of seven days, in the day when the Lord bindeth up the breach of His people, and healeth the stroke of their wound {Isa. 30:26}.

But more than that, the temple, according to Ezekiel, being rebuilt, certain of the feasts (not all of them, for obvious reasons,) will be again celebrated by the people of Israel. Sacrifices, too, will be offered according to the fifty-first Psalm, and the feast of tabernacles will be especially kept, as we learn from the fourteenth chapter of Zechariah. If we turn for a few moments to this chapter in Zechariah we shall find many interesting points on this subject plainly revealed. In the first place, as to the actual coming, the personal, visible coming of Christ to the earth, we are told in the fourth verse that

He shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives (see Zech. 14:4).

How is it possible for any one, who wishes to prove that the Lord is not coming personally to stand upon the earth again, to explain this text? of what other interpretation does it admit? More than this, there will be a very great earthquake, and this mount Olivet will cleave asunder. Now mark, it is mount Olivet, not mount Zion. We read,

they that trust in the Lord shall be [not as mount Olivet, but] as mount Zion {Psa. 125:1}.

Why? because mount Zion abideth for ever, but mount Olivet will cleave asunder, and there will be

a very great valley {Zech. 14:4}.

Moreover, we are told in the sixth verse,

It shall come to pass in that day that the light shall not be clear nor dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light {Zech. 14:6, 7};

that is, the natural light of the sun, to which I was referring just now, will be vastly augmented.

And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them towards the former sea, and half of them towards the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one (Zech. 14:8, 9).

Thus blessing will be dispensed from Jerusalem to all the nations of the earth.

Living waters shall go out.

Or, as we read in Isa. 2,

It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow

unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for *out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord front Jerusalem* {Isa. 2:2, 3}.

Jerusalem will then be the metropolis of spiritual blessing in the earth. And we find also the prophet Zechariah telling us in the twenty-third verse of the eighth chapter, that

ten men shall . . . take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you (Zech. 8:23).

Besides this, we are told in the fourteenth chapter that judgment will be executed on such of the nations as do not thus own Jerusalem.

In the sixteenth verse we have reference to the feast of tabernacles, and are told that the people will go up to Jerusalem from year to year, to keep the feast and worship the King the Lord of hosts. This will be a time of blessing, and of holiness too; for

Thus saith the Lord of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts (Zech. 8:20, 21).

It will be a time of indescribable rejoicing; but, as before noticed, it will not be without rule and judgment.

And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain (Zech. 14:17).

So that if a nation refuse to go up to Jerusalem to pay homage to the Lord of glory, the King over all the earth, rain will be withheld from that country. But we know that Egypt is not watered by rain from heaven, therefore there is to be a special judgment on that people.

And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles {Zech. 14:18, 19}.

It would be no punishment to Egypt to have no rain, because the land there is watered by the overflowing of the Nile; therefore there will be this special judgment on that people, if they do not go up to keep the feast of tabernacles. We see too that the enemies, according to God's promise, will be completely removed out of the land. What Israel failed to do Jesus will accomplish.

And in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts {Zech. 14:21}.

The Lord Himself will be there filling the whole of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel with blessing, which will also be dispensed by Israel to all the nations of the earth. The people of Israel will then have their proper place as head of all the nations of the earth, not as they now are under God's displeasure, humiliation, and judgment.

With regard to the creation, we are told in the eighth chapter of Romans that

the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now {Rom. 8:22}.

There is not an animal upon the earth that is exempt from pain; but we are told in the twenty-first verse that there is to be a different state of things --

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty [or liberty of the glory] of the children of God (Rom. 8:21).

This is to my mind the key to the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, and other portions which speak of the wonderful blessings of creation that will be connected with the reign of Christ. We are told in Isaiah, that when the King reigns in righteousness,

the wolf also shall dwell with the Lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea {Isa. 11:6-9}.

This will have a literal accomplishment; so that not only the Church of God, and Israel, and the nations, but creation also will be brought into marvelous blessing. The Lord will be King over all the earth. And not only will He bring every thing into subjection to Himself, and put all enemies under His feet, but the whole earth will be filled with blessing. *All the earth* shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. All nations will call Him blessed. Well might the psalmist exclaim in anticipation of that day,

Let *the heavens* rejoice, and let *the earth* be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice *before the Lord*: for He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth {Psa. 96:11-13}.

The same time is described also in the eighth Psalm:

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! {Psa. 8:4-9}.

Well may Israel sing then,

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's {Psa. 103:1-5}.

The 98th Psalm also refers to millennial times.

O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvelous things: His right hand, and His holy arm, hath gotten Him the victory. The Lord hath made known His salvation: His righteousness hath *He openly shewed* in the sight of the heathen (Gentiles). He hath remembered His *mercy and His truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends*

of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, *all the earth*: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise {Psa. 98:1-4}.

In the book of Revelation, too, we find reference to the same period. In the latter part of the fifth chapter we read,

And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever {Rev. 5:13}.

Then, according to the epistles of Colossians and Ephesians, all *things*, whether things in heaven or things on earth, will be reconciled unto Himself. Then all *things* will be gathered together in one in Christ, *both* which are *in heaven* and which are *on earth*, even in Him. So much for the mid-day glory of the millennial reign of Christ. Now for a word as to the shades of evening, the closing part of the thousand years.

At the end, Satan, who has been bound, will be let loose for a little season. The result will be, that after men have experienced the untold blessings of the millennial age, they will again yield to Satan's temptation, and readily fall in with his suggestions. Such is man! Myriads of them will enlist under the banner of the great deceiver, according to the twentieth of Revelation, and encompass the camp of the beloved saints at Jerusalem. You will notice that there will be saints then on the earth. The result of Satan's deception will be, that the Lord, after His reign of a thousand years over the earth, will call down fire from heaven in consuming judgment on those who have been thus led astray,

the number of whom is as the sand of the sea {Rev. 20:8}.

And more than this: He will then take Satan, and cast him into the lake of fire, where he is to be tormented day and night for ever and ever. In this way the first prophecy of Scripture will have its fulfilment. Satan will be bruised for ever under the feet of the Lord Jesus, and, blessed be His name, under our feet too.

There is one thing more, which closes the reign of Christ; it is the judgment of the wicked dead. Every one, from the first person who died in his sins, will then be judged; the dead must then hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth. So particular is the instruction, that they are called

the dead, small and great {Rev. 20:12}.

If they should be at the bottom of the sea, they must come up; wherever they are, in the grasp of death and hell (or hades), they must be delivered up. If they have fallen, and perished in some secret place, without a human eye to see them in the article of death; if they have fallen into a ravine, or perished in the desert, or their burial-place never have been known to man, it matters not; death and hades (the place of departed spirits) must give them up at the command of Jesus. These dead -- meaning all unsaved people, dead in trespasses and sins -- will be brought up at the resurrection of judgment; they will be judged, each person, small and great, according to their works. They will stand before God. The books will be opened. One book -- the book of remembrance, I doubt not -- is to show the judged ones at a glance their own history:

I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes {Psa. 50:21}.

Another book will be there, which, I believe, is the Bible. Jesus said,

The word that I speak unto you shall judge you in that day
{see John 12:48}.

There will be a third book -- the Book of Life -- to show them that their names are not written therein, to convict them that they never received Christ for eternal life; for there could not be written in the Book of Life the names of any who are without Christ. Christ is

the life {John 14:6},

and those who are in Christ have their names written in that book. These three witnesses -- the book of remembrance, the Bible, and the Lamb's Book of Life -- will silence for ever those who stand before that throne; and with deepest anguish and remorse will they hear the Lord's

Depart {Luke 13:27},

and be cast away for ever from His presence; for

whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire {Rev. 20:15}.

Then death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed. The last act in the reign of Christ will be to cast death and hades into the lake of fire. They will no more be wanted. The last enemy is thus destroyed; the victory of Christ is now complete.

On the commencement of the session of the great white throne, we are told, as you will remember, that the heaven and the earth flee away. The awful conflagration mentioned by the apostle Peter will both burn up the earth and all man's works in it. No footprint of sinful man shall remain to mar the new condition of things that will follow. No flesh shall glory in His presence is and ever will be a divine axiom. Heaven and earth in their present state will then literally pass away, but will be followed by a fulfilment of the first verse of the 21st chapter of Revelation.

I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea (Rev. 21:1).

This verse introduces us to the eternal state. The end of things as they now are shows us that God has done everything according to divine righteousness. The salvation of the sinner has been by grace through righteousness, God having accomplished redemption by righteously dealing with Christ, the sinner's Substitute, on the cross. Having then righteously condemned sin in the flesh, it became a righteous thing for God to raise Him up from the dead and give Him glory, and also to raise us up together with Him. Thus

grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord {see Rom. 5:21}.

And in condemning the sinner to eternal burning for his sins, it also is an act of divine righteousness, and is final, and must be for ever. No finite being will ever be able to drink up all the cup of God's infinite hatred to sin. No suffering of the creature could ever satisfy the demands of divine righteousness. The Son of God did that, and He alone could. The judgment of the wicked being according to righteousness, it must be for ever. They must drink the cup of God's unmixed wrath and indignation. They will

therefore be in outer darkness, far from God's holy presence, and be tormented for ever and ever.

After righteous judgment has done its work, as we have seen, there will be

new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness {2 Pet. 3:13}.

Sin will then have for ever passed away, and righteousness will dwell. There will be no imperfection in these new places; no infirmity, nor curse, nor sorrow, nor death shall stain these hallowed regions. We are told in the fourth verse,

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away {Rev. 21:4}.

Satan will have been for ever cast into the pit of eternal misery with all his associates, man for ever blessed, God for ever glorified; all the former things will have for ever passed away, and God have made all things new. It is a remarkable fact, that in the new earth there will be no more sea. Now it seems as if the vast sheets of water rolling between the various kingdoms were often a means of keeping nations peaceable, which would not be so if they were more accessible to each other; to say nothing of the impossibility of animal life being sustained without sea, as we are at present constituted. In the eternal state God will find rest; all will be according to His mind. We are told that

the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God {Rev. 21:3}.

The tabernacle of God I take to be the Church; we find her spoken of in the previous verse:

I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband {Rev. 21:2}.

Observe, we do not get the Lamb spoken of here; for it is the eternal state, the kingdom has been delivered up unto the Father, and God is all in all. Neither have we "nations," which had their origin in Babel's pride, but it is "men" --

the tabernacle of God is with *men*.

Thus "men" will enjoy the presence and blessing of God as far as creature capabilities will allow. Not only will every thing like sorrow and death be for ever expunged from the earth, but God will be continually giving forth fresh blessings. Hence the promise,

I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life *freely* {Rev. 21:6}.

Thus God will be constantly blessing, and satisfying the desires of His people. All there

"Will, from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in."

But, side by side with this brightest, happiest picture of man in eternal blessing, we have also the misery of the unbeliever. This is again introduced here, as it appears to me, in order that there might be no room for a question as to the perpetuity of their condemnation.

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death {Rev. 21:8}.

Can any thing be more conclusive? Be assured, there is no coming out of that pit. It is impossible; for divine judgment and righteousness have put them there. There is no warrant in Scripture for purgatorial fire. Nor can we imagine that the blessed Lord would have repeated five times within the compass of a few verses the conclusive statement,

Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched {Mark 9:44, 46, 48},

had He not intended to show the final and eternal doom that awaited the guilty and lost. Intelligent Jews doubtless understood to what He alluded. In Israel's former days of impiety large fires were lighted in the valley of the son of Hinnom, through which they caused their children to pass; as for instance in Manasseh's day. After this abomination was given up, the same pits, say in Josiah's day, were used for throwing offal and other impurities, and there worms might often be seen devouring food. But in our Lord's time it is easy to believe, that not only had the fires been extinguished, but the worms had disappeared. In the eternal scene, however, to which our Lord pointed, the fire would never be put out, nor the worm cease. It is a place

where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

Alas! for the misery that awaits the unbeliever. Can any room be possibly left for a question as to their eternal condemnation? Did not our Lord say,

He that *believeth not the Son* shall not see life, but *the wrath of God* ABIDETH [think of that word *abideth*] ON HIM {John 3:36}?

May God in His infinite mercy deal with any unsaved souls in this hall to-night! He still preaches peace through Jesus Christ. The arms of Jesus are wide open to welcome poor sinners. His gracious words are as fresh, as fervent, as attractive as ever --

come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

If any sinner on the face of the earth, however deeply plunged in guilt, desires salvation, that blessed sinner-loving Jesus in glory is still able to save, and still delights in mercy. But when once He has risen up, and has shut to the door, many who are now deaf to His voice of mercy, and refuse His words of grace, will come knocking in bitterest anguish, and find it is too late!

Again, my friends, you have heard to-night of the wrath of God, the judgment, and eternal misery that await the wicked. Some of you know that you are at this moment treading the broad way to everlasting destruction. Let me, then, once more beseech you to accept the Lord Jesus as your Savior, believing God's unerring testimony to His finished work as having made a just atonement for all your sins. Then you will be able joyfully to sing,

"The cross, the cross! oh, that's my gain;
For there it was the Lamb was slain;
'Twas there *my* Lord was crucified,
'Twas there *my Savior for me died*."

Then you will be able to serve Christ, and it will be your joy to wait for His return from heaven. Those who are occupied with Christ will not think it a hard thing to walk in separation from what dishonors Him. We must be abiding *in* Him, if we would live *for* Him; and the more His personal and moral glories occupy our *hearts*, the more shall we desire to see His face. He has assured us that He will come again, and come quickly, and that until He come His grace is sufficient for us. What other response then, beloved friends, to all this mercy becomes us? Can we, do we from our hearts say,

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly {see Rev. 22:20}?

Notes on
The Revelation

with

Practical Reflections

by
H. H. Snell

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Preface

The following pages do not lay any claim to originality. The views put forth are, in the main, held by many of the Lord's servants; and the writer has freely availed himself of the thoughts of the best instructed on this portion of God's truth. It is hoped that the division of the book into sections, with a simple exposition and practical reflections, will be found helpful, through God's blessing, especially to those who are beginning to see the value of this marvelous part of the Scripture.

Most believers will admit, that if we are not seeking to embrace the whole range of divine truth, there must be a serious lack both of comfort of soul and of testimony for the Lord; and if the word of God be not an object of interest to our

hearts, something injurious will usurp its place, and thus the affections and desires will be turned from Him who alone is entitled to them, and who says,

My son, give me thine heart {Prov. 23:26}.

These considerations are deemed sufficient reasons for calling attention to "THE REVELATION."

Where an alteration has been made in the commonly received text, it has generally been in accordance with all the best critics.

To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen {Jude 25}.

Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that few persons read the book of Revelation. Why is this? With some, its difficulties are pleaded as an excuse, but its name, signifying something revealed, would certainly lead us to expect greater obstacles to its being understood than other portions of the Holy Scriptures; though we know that the natural man is unable to understand or receive any part of God's truth, but by teaching of the Holy Ghost. The question may be fairly asked, Can we find a single Christian who has read this book, prayerfully looking for the guidance of the Holy Ghost, who has not obtained much blessing? The many speculative and fanciful theories that have been advanced may have deterred some from going beyond its threshold, while the systematic way in which it has been excluded from the teaching of many godly persons, may have been the means of keeping others from having their attention directed to it. But whatever may be the reasons assigned for the neglect of this blessed portion of Divine truth, we may be assured that Satan has succeeded in robbing many of the Lord's dear children of the profit and enjoyment of this last written communication of the risen and ascended Jesus to His Church.

But after all, it is questionable whether *indifferentism* be not in most instances the reason why "The Revelation" is so neglected. Let us test ourselves on this point. If we were more alive to the realities of the Cross of Christ -- the price paid for our redemption -- if the groans of the Sin-Bearer, and His unutterable, unfathomable sorrows were felt in our souls with more freshness and power, how could we rest till we read, nay, understood, His last words to the assemblies? How could we think of Him as our ever-living and ever-loving High Priest, without being deeply concerned about those things which He declares must shortly come to pass?

The Revelation may truly be called the book of results. In it, though Christ's faithfulness to His own abides, declension marks the Churches. Sin receives its eternal wages. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, are seen in full bloom, and pass away for ever. False religion is judged, its blazing glory extinguished, and the smoke of the unchaste woman rises up for ever and ever. Man living in rebellion is crushed under the feet of Jesus, and the dead are banished from His presence for ever. The Antichrist and his associates meet their just and most terrible abasement and misery. Satan is everlastingly consigned to the lake of fire. The created heavens and earth are cleared of evil, and Christ's power fully known, His worth fully owned. The Church is seen in glory, in uncreated light and beauty, and the new heavens and the new earth speak to us only of righteousness and blessing from God to man. It is emphatically a book of judgment upon things on earth; prophetic, of course, in its character.

Unlike the Epistles, we do not find the believer's calling or relationship with the Father treated of in the Revelation. We only have the Father referred to about four times; twice as "*His Father*" and "*my Father*," and always referring to God as the Father of the Lord Jesus. In this book we see God preparing the

earth for His Son, the rightful Heir, under whose feet all enemies will be put.

There appear to be three great hindrances to saints having a clear apprehension of at least the outline of this blessed book. First, the false and unbelieving feeling, long cherished by many, that the Revelation is full of mysteries which no one can understand. Secondly, the erroneous idea that the main scope of the book is a prophetic statement of events while the Church is on earth, and that we are now perhaps in the midst of the outpouring of some of the vials. The consequence is, that it is approached with wrong thoughts, so that the book becomes at once so perplexing that it is quickly laid aside. Thirdly, the chief difficulty perhaps is having false ideas of what the Church of God really is; not seeing its special and unique character, which is defined in Scripture to be

the body of Christ, the fulness of Him which filleth all in all
(Eph. 1:21, 22).

When the believer clearly sees that the Lord abolished in His death the law of commandments in ordinances in order to create (not apart from Himself, but) "in Himself" ONE NEW MAN, he gets at once something new before his mind, very distinct from what had ever gone before, or, as I believe, will follow. It was to this the Lord referred when He said to Peter,

Upon this rock will I build my Church (Matt. 16:18).

Believers now know union with Christ, and are partakers of the heavenly calling -- are quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This very distinctive truth the book of Revelation does not enter into; for it is, as we have said, a book of judgment, and especially of things in relation to the earth. We do get in the Revelation the Lord judging the assemblies on earth professedly gathered to His name, but the Church in her special and unique character *as the body of Christ*, as before observed, is not treated of there; she is, however, seen coming down from heaven as the Bride, the Lamb's wife, in manifested glory, to take her place in the glories of the kingdom, and she is also seen afterwards as the Bride in the eternal state, when the Son shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father.

We must not, however, forget that the same portion of God's word often admits of more solutions than one. Besides, there are principles in it as well as facts. In this way, we doubt not the use of the book, in past times of the Church, for the guidance and blessing of those who were a testimony against the tyrannical pretensions of Rome.

We find a table of contents at the close of the first chapter.

1. The things which John saw.
2. The things which are.
3. The things which shall be hereafter, or, after these things.

We have at once, therefore, a sure guide at the threshold of the book. But more than this; for from the beginning of the fourth

chapter, where the third division commences, on to the end, we have also several sub-divisions or sections. These are not arranged as a number of historical discourses, each following the other in regular order of narration, but each division gives us a distinct line of instruction. Thus the whole book may be regarded as a series of pictures, each distinct from the others, and every one, so far as it goes, complete in itself; and if we will only be content to take one of these sections at a time, and study it prayerfully, we shall find that at least the outline of the book will be clearly seen, though we may have still much to learn as to the details.

The book opens with introductory sentences, extending to the end of the eighth verse. Then we have the sections of the book fairly presented to us.

1. The vision of the first chapter, and its connections, form a distinct section or picture -- the things which John saw -- the Lord as Son of man in the midst of the assemblies, judging them as to their responsibility to Him, as light-bearers in a dark world. It extends from the ninth verse to the end.

2. The second and third chapters form another division -- the things which are. Here the saints' accountability as to the rights of Christ, the honor of Christ, and the truth of Christ, are clearly brought out. We learn the solemn responsibility of assemblies bearing the name of Christ; and see everything judged according to the love, and truth, and holiness of that name. How few seem to be aware of their accountability to Christ for their corporate position and action, and of what is really involved in being gathered together in the name of Jesus.

3. The fourth and fifth chapters present to us another picture. It is mostly a heavenly scene. Everything is looked at in connection with the throne of God. The lamb, as it had been slain, fills heaven with joy and praise, and the circle so widens, that our spirits are led out into the contemplation of millennial blessing, when every creature in heaven, and earth, and under the earth, will praise the Lamb.

4. We may look at the opening of the SEVEN SEALS as another section. It extends from the beginning of the sixth chapter to the fifth verse of the eighth chapter.

The seventh chapter coming in between the sixth and seventh seals is a parenthesis. There is also a parenthesis between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, and the outpouring of the sixth and seventh vials. Each of these seven-fold series of judgments terminates in lightnings, and thunderings, and voices, and a great earthquake.

5. The sounding of the SEVEN TRUMPETS may be looked at also as a distinct section, extending from the sixth verse of the eighth chapter to the end of the eleventh chapter. Observe that this division goes on to the judgment of the dead at the end of the millennium. It is important to notice also, that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, when there are lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, the Lord Jesus comes forth in glory with His saints to take the kingdom, and judge the world in righteousness. The voices in heaven say,

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever {Rev. 11:15}.

The parenthesis between the sixth and seventh trumpets occupies the tenth chapter, and the first fourteen verses of the eleventh chapter.

6. The twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth chapters give us another section. It is a deeply interesting portion for our spiritual contemplation. It goes back to the incarnation of our Lord -- the man-child -- and extends to His coming in flaming fire to tread the winepress of the wrath of God. It is the history of the remnant of Israel in the time of the great tribulation.

7. The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters may be read together. We first have the martyred remnant of the previous section now standing on the sea of glass before the throne of God in heaven; then we have the outpouring of the vials.

There is also a short parenthesis between the sixth and seventh vials.

8. Though we have had the judgment and fall of Babylon announced before, yet so important is the consideration of this

mother of harlots and abominations of the earth {Rev. 17:5},

that the next two chapters are occupied in giving details of her mysterious working and bewitching influence. Multitudes are deceived by her, and drawn within the vortex of her intoxicating grasp. As she had a place of luxuriousness and popularity in the world, both in a civil and religious aspect, so her sorrow and torment must be accordingly.

9. The nineteenth and twentieth chapters, and also the first eight verses of the twenty-first chapter give us another separate portion of this blessed book. The Lamb's wife is here seen in contrast with the great whore. The marriage of the Lamb takes place, and heaven is opened for Christ and His saints to come forth in manifested glory. The judgment of the beast and false prophet, the kings of the earth and their associates, and the binding of Satan, usher in the millennial reign. Here we get the first resurrection defined, as, in a manner, distributive, and all who have part in it reign with Christ. We have also the letting loose of Satan at the close of the thousand years, and the judgment of God upon the myriads of living wicked deceived by him, followed by the final judgment of all the wicked dead. This is succeeded by a description of the eternal state, the new heaven and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

10. The next scene takes us back again. It gives us the Bride, the Lamb's wife, in relation to the kingdom during the reign of Christ, filling up a most important and necessary part in prophetic truth. It extends from the ninth verse of the twenty-first chapter to the sixth verse of the twenty-second chapter. It is a golden scene, full of light, and life, and blessing. The former part of the chapter shows us the Bride in her eternal state.

The last section is followed by some fragmentary sentences, in which the coming of the Lord as the present hope of the believer is the most prominent thought.

With this book the Scriptures are closed, so that for any man now to add to God's word is to expose himself to the plagues written in this book. It is addressed by the Lord to the assemblies, and concludes with the thrice repeated assurance of His coming quickly.

In looking through this blessed book, however hastily, we cannot fail to notice how often Christ is brought before us as THE LAMB. Its importance is obvious; for the believer proves in his experience that truth itself, apart from The Truth, is rather calculated to amuse the intellect than to warm the heart; it also shows us that God's way of teaching prophecy is not so much by the arrangement of events in chronological order, as viewing everything in relation to Christ Himself. In the Revelation, THE LAMB is the center around which all else is clustered, the foundation on which everything lasting is built, the nail on which all else hangs, the object to which all points, and the spring from which all blessing proceeds. THE LAMB is the light, the glory, the life, the Lord of heaven and earth, from whose face all defilement must flee away, and in whose presence fulness of joy is known. Hence, we cannot go far in the study of The Revelation, without seeing THE LAMB, like direction-posts along the road, to remind us that He who did by Himself purge our sins is now highly exalted, and that to Him every knee must bow, and every tongue confess.

If the saying of another be true, that

"They flourish as the watered herb,
Who keep THE LAMB in sight."

then this one feature of this inspired book should be enough to engage our hearts, and warrant the largest expectations of blessing. And if the frequent contemplation of the precious blood of Christ keeps down the weeds of our flesh, nourishes the inner man, and is the wine that cheers both God and man, we may be assured of gathering much profit from the frequent and prayerful reading of this book, where THE LAMB as it had been slain is so prominently set forth, and where we are so often reminded of the sufferings of Christ, and the judgments and glories which follow.

Chapter 1:1-3: Introductory Verses

The first words give us the title of the book -- "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." The first three verses are a kind of preface. We are reminded that the ascended Jesus, though invested with all power in heaven and in earth, is still Jehovah's righteous servant, and as such receives this book from God. John, not simply by the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, as was usual, but by the guidance of an angel, receives the particulars of the book to communicate to the churches. We are told that the object of the Revelation is to show unto His *servants* the things which must *shortly* come to pass. (They are not called, as in John's other writings, the *friends* of Jesus, or *sons* of God, but *servants*.) To show the shortness of time in the mind of God, and the speedy fulfilment of the prophetic word, it is added in the third verse,

The time is at hand {Rev. 1:3}.

John writes with authority, being conscious that he is recording God's truth, and that the various scenes and actions he was about to relate were the testimony of Jesus Christ -- things which he had heard and seen in vision (ver. 2).

An especial blessing is promised to those who *hear* (even if unable to read) (ver. 3). How encouraging! How different are man's thoughts to God's! Man says, Do not read the book of Revelation, it is so difficult; or do not listen to any who may read it to you. God says, Whether you read or hear you shall find blessing.

By keeping

those things which are written therein {Rev. 1:3},

we have not the thought of obeying commands, like the law of Moses, as much as keeping in the heart the solemn instruction which the prophetic word conveys. In this book, the future passes before the mind's eye like a panorama, shedding its light upon everything of the present, and pointing out the course of all the principles at work around us. All who keep these things in their hearts will find present blessing. We are told that Mary kept the sayings of Jesus in her heart. Jesus also spoke of this as a special mark of those who loved Him:

If a man love me, he will *keep my words*: . . . He that loveth me not *keepeth not my sayings* (John 14:23, 24).

Surely this is a searching word for the conscience of any who have neglected the sayings of Jesus contained in "The Revelation."

Verses 4 to 8 may be looked at as introductory to the great subjects of the book.

Seven churches in Asia are selected for John to address. He salutes them in the usual apostolic manner with

Grace unto you, and peace {Rev. 1:4}.

Observe the order. -- not peace and grace, but "Grace unto you, and peace"; because peace always flows from grace, and our

enjoyment of peace is entirely dependent on our apprehension of Divine grace. But it is not, as in other epistles, added, from God the Father, but

from Him which is, and which was, and which is to come {Rev. 1:4};

that is, from the eternal I AM; for this book is rather the dealings of God with man in the earth, than of the Father with His sons. Then we get,

From the seven Spirits which are before His throne {Rev. 1:4}.

As seven is a symbol of perfection, we have the Eternal Spirit in fulness in His various actings, rather than the indwelling and actings of the "one Spirit" in the Church, as in Ephesians (v. 4).

Lastly, it is from

Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness;

for every other witness has proved more or less unfaithful:

the first-begotten from the dead,

for He is the Son begotten in resurrection; the first who rose from the dead, never more to die; and He is also presented as

the Prince of the kings of the earth {Rev. 1:5},

because the book largely treats of kings, and other things of earth; hence His title and power are asserted. Immediately the glory, triumph, and dominion of Christ are spoken of, the Church seems at once exulting to respond with,

Unto Him that loved [loveth] us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father. To Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen {Rev. 1:5, 6}.

Notice in this song --

1st. They have the joy of present redemption.

2nd. That all true believers are priests -- a royal priesthood; and

3rd. That all is traced to Divine love, and flows to us through the blood-shedding and death of the Son of God. This fills the heart with joy, and the lips with praise (vv.5, 6).

In v. 7, the Lord's coming is presented to us according to the subject of the book in relation to the earth. His saints (of course) are with Him, having been previously caught up to meet Him in the air. The scene is Christ manifested in glory as the only Potentate. The last time the world saw Christ was on the Cross; the next time they see Him will be coming in the clouds of heaven. Then, in His own glory, the glory of the Father and of the holy angels, with all His saints changed and fashioned into His glorious likeness, with a dazzling brightness that is inconceivable,

every eye shall see Him {Rev. 1:7}.

The Jews, too, shall

look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn {see
Zech. 12:10};

while all the tribes of the earth in bitterest anguish wail, because
Jesus is come to take vengeance, and put all enemies under His
feet.

“Bright with all His Crowns of glory,
See the royal Victor’s brow;
Once for sinners marred and glory --
See the Lamb exalted now;
While before Him
Every knee on earth must bow.

“King of kings! let earth adore Him
High on His exalted throne;
Fall, ye nations, fall before Him,
And His righteous sceptre own;
All the glory
Be to Him and Him alone!”

Happy those who can peacefully contemplate that day, and
truly say,

Even so. Amen {Rev. 1:7}.

After we are thus instructed about the manifestation of Christ in
glory, the announcement of His eternal Godhead closes the
introduction (v. 8).

Chapter 1:9-20: The Things Which John Saw

We now come, strictly speaking, to THE REVELATION. It is divided into three parts:

The things which thou hast seen, and the things which are,
and the things which shall be hereafter,

or

after these things (v. 19).

The first division occupies the first chapter, from the twelfth to the seventeenth verses. These are the things which John had just seen.

John addresses himself, not as one in apostolic office, or as a member of the “one body,” the Church, but as a brother of all the servants of God, and their companion in the kingdom, now characterized by tribulation and by exercise of patience. The kingdom predicted by prophets promised peace and blessing, as will be known in millennial times; but the kingdom has hitherto been, and in the action of this book is marked with tribulation and evil by Satan’s power, although also by God’s blessing to His people, and will end in judgment, as we learn from Matt. 13:11, 42, 50, and other Scriptures. It is the kingdom of heaven *in mystery*. There is, therefore, need of patience until Jesus comes.

In the world ye shall have tribulation,

said Jesus;

but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world
{John 16:33}.

The Lord’s aged and honored servant was banished to Patmos, a desolate island in the Grecian Archipelago, for the word of God and the testimony of Christ. Little, perhaps, did he think that the solitary and barren island would be a place for his being favoured by God with such deep communion and astounding revelations. But so it was. Again the apostle proved that

before honour is humility {Prov. 15:33, 18:12},

and that God’s way of preparing us for special blessing is to bring low; as we sometimes say, “The way to exaltation is the dust”; and the thought is full of comfort to God’s tried and humbled children. Those who are exercised before God will usually find that the longer and deeper the time of trial, the richer the blessing that follows.

The apostle tells that he

was in the Spirit {Rev. 1:10}.

While all believers have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, we are not always “in the Spirit.” To be “in the Spirit” implies that the faculties of the soul are so under the power and unction of the Holy Ghost, as to enable us to discern and enter into the mind of God, and to be occupied with His things. This is an important practical point. It is to be feared that we often set about attending

to spiritual matters in a carnal frame, and are content to know that the Holy Spirit dwells in us, without being careful to be “in the Spirit.” We need the anointed eye, and a spiritual frame of soul, if we would profit others or enjoy the truth of God ourselves. By

the Lord’s day {Rev. 1:10}

we are not to understand “the day of the Lord,” but the first day of the week; the day which reminds us of the resurrection of Christ from the dead, of rest in a finished work, and triumph in a risen Head.

The first thing that arrested the attention of the apostle was the sound *behind* him of

a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches, etc.
{Rev. 1:10, 11}.

Thus the person is announced, and the apostle’s service clearly marked out. This trumpet-like sound induced John to *turn round* to see what it was, when the glorious vision of

one like unto the Son of man,

in the midst of seven golden candlesticks {see Rev. 1:13},

was immediately brought before him.

With regard to the candlesticks, we are told

The seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches (Rev. 1:20);

thus we do not get here the doctrine of “the Church,” the body of Christ, “one body,” “one new man,” and such-like expressions, but “seven churches”; because the vision has regard to those who bear the name of Christ in earthly circumstances, and in responsibility to Christ, rather than the one body, or as seated in heavenly places in Christ, as we find treated of in Ephesians. The Lord is therefore seen

in the midst {Rev. 1:13}.

This is His promised place.

Whosoever two or three are gathered together in my name,
there am I *in the midst* of them {Matt. 18:20}.

The thought, however, of the one body of Christ is in a certain sense included, inasmuch as there was but one candlestick in one city -- no division. In fact, the idea of different churches in one city is nowhere found in Scripture, while division, or a sectarian position, is most solemnly condemned. The Church, therefore, composed of all the believers in a city, as in Ephesus for instance, was a golden candlestick, -- costly, precious, and valuable as gold, and a fit vessel for bearing light. Such is the Church of God. It has no light in itself -- nothing but what is bestowed by the ascended Jesus.

Christ is seen in the midst of the “golden candlesticks,” and that, too, in the character of a discerner and judge in His own house, the only time we have Him in such a character, with readiness to bless and encourage, as well as to correct. And I cannot exclude the thought, that His first being presented as

like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle {Rev. 1:13},

is to remind us that He is also a merciful, compassionate, and sympathizing High Priest. By

His head and hairs white like wool, as white as snow,

we are taught that He not only bears the marks of the Ancient of Days (Dan 7), but is infinitely pure and holy; while

His eyes, as a flame of fire {Rev. 1:14},

are all searching, from whose notice nothing can escape. His almighty power to put all enemies under His feet, and trample them in His fury, may be brought out by

His feet, like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace;

and

His voice, as the sound of many waters {Rev. 1:15},

may teach us that His mighty voice may be heard far and wide as the thunders of the fall of Niagara; for unto Him is given all power in heaven and in earth.

Nor are the assemblies to forget that

out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword {Rev. 1:16},

by which He can execute judgments (Rev. 2:16). His countenance, the bright effulgence of glory and uncreated light, was

as the sun shineth in his strength {Rev. 1:16}.

By

the seven stars in His right hand {see Rev. 1:16},

we are taught not only that He is the Source, but the Sustainer of all ministry to the Church.

He gave gifts unto men {Eph. 4:8},

and in His power alone they can be exercised for true profit. Christ is presented to us as judging the churches, as Peter tells

judgment must begin at the house of God {1 Pet. 4:17}.

It is quite unscriptural to call a building of brick and stone a “sanctuary,” or “house of God.” God’s people, the members of Christ, *now* are God’s house; it is composed of living stones, and Christ judges both individually and corporately. Blessed it is to know that the Master’s rule is

If we judge ourselves, we should not be judged {1 Cor. 11:31};

but it is very solemn, that

when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world {1 Cor. 11:32}.

Like the true antitype of Aaron, Christ trims the lamps, removes the hindrances to the bright burning of the light, pours in oil, and never extinguishes the feeble glimmer of little faith. Christ must have realities.

Such is Christ’s present place among the churches. Though, strictly speaking, no company of Christians can *now* lay claim to be the candlestick in any place, because of our sinful divisions and sects, yet we can always count upon His presence, if really

gathered together in His name (Matt. 18:20).

But while we are assured of His presence, we should never forget our responsibility to Him as the Head of the body, and Master of His own house (Heb. 3:6).

Verse 17. The effect of this glorious vision of Christ on the beloved apostle he then describes:

When I saw HIM, I fell at His feet as dead {Rev. 1:17}.

Overpowered with the glimpse of the glorified Son of man, the mortal powers gave way; but it was only to bring out the grace and tenderness of Him who was so precious to the apostle’s heart. The

right hand

of Jesus was soon laid on His servant, now fallen prostrate at His feet, and the comforting words fell from His gracious lips,

Fear not; I am the first and the last. I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death {Rev. 1:17, 18}.

Thus, by the eye and heart being again fixed on the triumphant Savior, who conquered death and hell for him, and by the Lord’s tender assurance that He was his loving Savior, and that there was no ground for fear, John was comforted, and then instructed to write what he had just seen.

Chapters 2 and 3: The Things Which Are

{Introduction}

In the second and third chapters we have presented to us the next section of THE REVELATION --

The things which are {Rev. 1:3, 19}.

That these seven assemblies really existed at the time there can be no doubt, and it is very profitable to have the Lord's judgment recorded of the condition they were in, and of what He had to command or to reprove. We thus get a line of instruction that is most valuable to us both individually, and as connected together on assembly ground.

Believers, in this dispensation, have a high, holy, and heavenly calling, are brought into very wonderful privileges, receive most blessed spiritual gifts, and, therefore, have solemn responsibilities. God is also building *together* those who are saved by grace. There are, therefore, corporate as well as personal obligations to Christ, who is

over His house {Heb. 3:6}.

Hence Christ judges, commends, instructs, rebukes, and chastens.

We must bear in mind, as before remarked, that it is not the Church as seen in heaven, or truth of one body that is here considered; but local assemblies on earth, associated not only with Christ and His truth, but with evil and failure, and exposed to outward persecution and conflict with Satan. The circle embraces those who were standing out under the profession of the name of Christ. The Lord, therefore, judges. Peter says:

The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God {1 Pet. 4:17}.

We can judge ourselves by these just weights of the sanctuary.

But while it is plain, that these addresses strictly represent the condition of seven actual congregations, there are good reasons for believing that they are intended to give us a prophetic sketch of the Church on earth to the very end.

1. Because we have no mention in the Revelation of churches on earth after the close of these chapters; that is, the Church is never seen on earth, after the conclusion of "the things which are." the saints are seen in heaven from the fourth chapter onward, having been caught up to meet the Lord at His coming.

2. Christ speaks of the seven candlesticks as a *mystery*, giving us the idea of there being something symbolic in their meaning (chap. 1:20). The Lord is seen only in the midst of these seven; but no one doubts that Christ was in the midst of all the perhaps hundreds of assemblies on earth at that time. Again, the number seven, called a perfect number, is frequently used in this book as symbolical of a whole. Thus we have seven spirits before the throne, seven lamps of fire, seven stars, seven candlesticks, seven

eyes, seven horns, seven seals, seven angels, seven trumpets, seven vials, and seven last plagues.

3. The first assembly named exactly corresponds with the earliest failure of the Church in this dispensation -- declension of heart:

Thou hast left thy first love {Rev. 2:4}.

This was the beginning of *falling away* --

Remember therefore from whence thou art *fallen* {Rev. 2:5}.

The last church of the seven is so thoroughly self-satisfied, heartless, and indifferent to Christ's glory, that He is ready to disown it altogether:

I will spue thee out of my mouth {Rev. 3:16}.

This, too, is what we expect at the close. The word of the apostle concerning this dispensation is

Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity, but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; *otherwise thou also shalt be cut off* {Rom. 11:20-22}.

These are solemn words. We know that they are not intended to shake the security of the true believer in Christ, but to intimate that God will disown apostate Christianity, as He has apostate Judaism. The intermediate assemblies remind us also of outward persecution, the polluting ravages of Balaam's doctrine -- carnality and worldliness; the abominations of adulterous Jezebel and her children -- Popery, with the coming in of hope of the Lord's return; dead formality -- Protestantism, with a few walking with the Lord; some spiritual reviving, with promise of being kept from the hour of temptation, just before the awful indifference sets in: ending in being disowned by Christ altogether.

If it be asked, What is meant by "the angel" of the church, to which each letter is addressed? We reply, There is no scriptural ground whatever for identifying it with "the pastor." While pastors are blessed gift of the ascended Jesus, the idea of "the pastor" is not found in the New Testament; for there might have been many "pastors" in each assembly. There were many overseers at Ephesus, and also "bishops" and "deacons" in the church at Philippi. It is easier to say what the angel is not, than exactly to define what it is. We would speak humbly on a subject of such controversy. But finding the expression,

The mystery of the seven stars, which thou sawest . . . are the angels of the seven churches,

and that they are held in the

right hand {Rev. 1:20}

of the risen and ascended Jesus, we are inclined to believe that the angel is symbolic of gifted persons mentioned in Eph. 4, those who have the Lord's work at heart, through whom the Lord could communicate His mind, and whom He holds in a certain sense responsible, both as to faithfulness and failure of the assembly.

In each of these epistles the Lord presents Himself in a character suited to the peculiar condition of the assembly. He asserts His rights as Son over His own house and judges. The saints are taught their responsibilities to Him, and to view everything in relation to Him. Many grieve at having offended a brother, but how have we treated Christ? Have we honored Him? Have we been faithful to His truth? Have we given to Him His right place? Has He had our affections? Have we walked worthy of Him? He informs each assembly that He is thoroughly acquainted with it.

I know thy works {Rev. 2:1, 9, 13, 19, 3:1, 8, 15}.

Observe that Christ's rule is to commend everything He can first, and then to enter upon failure. We commonly find this in the New Testament. If Christ had to reprove one for doubting, He first acknowledged the faith:

O ye of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? {see Matt. 14:31}

and when Paul wrote, by the Holy Ghost, to the saints at Corinth, who were dishonoring the Lord in so many ways, he began his epistle by enumerating the things he could approve in them. This is always a mark of spiritual-mindedness. We are looking at persons carnally, if we think only of their failures. We do well to be imitators of God, as dear children, in this respect.

In those addresses, while corporate responsibility to Christ is fully owned, yet each individual conscience is appealed to:

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches {Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22}.

Observe, too, that each is to hear what is addressed to *all* the assemblies, according to the truths of the one body and one Spirit. This makes every part of these addresses of deep personal import to all. The promise is also to the *individual* that overcomes --

Him that overcometh, etc. {see Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21}.

A word of instruction, remonstrance, or exhortation is also given to each assembly, calculated to restore; and also an encouragement set before the overcomer. If it be asked, What is meant by "him that overcometh"? We are answered by the same apostle in another letter:

Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? {1 John 5:4, 5}.

The overcomer, then, is the true follower of Christ. He it is that holds fast to the end; for He that has begun a good work in us will perform it until the day of Christ. The promises, therefore, to the overcomer are generally similar to the promises of the gospel; such as, he shall

eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God {Rev. 2:7};

thou shalt have a crown of life {see Rev. 2:10};

he

shall not be hurt of the second death {Rev. 2:11}, etc.

Now let us look a little at the peculiar features of each assembly.

Ephesus

The Lord commends these saints for their labours and patience; their faithfulness in testing those who said they were apostles, and proving *them* to be liars; their patient continuance in labouring for Christ's name sake, and not fainting; for their hatred to the *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes, and intolerance of evil persons. But with all these good qualities the Lord had something serious against them, and could only regard them as "fallen," notwithstanding all their *outward* zeal; for they had *inwardly* declined in affection to Himself.

Thou hast left thy *first love* {Rev. 2:4}.

This was very deep failure; for it is the affections and desires of our hearts that are to be guarded --

Keep thy *heart*, etc. {Prov. 4:23}.

We love Him because He first loved us {1 John 4:19}.

It was failure, then, most grievous to the heart of Jesus, and which weakened, if not corrupted, the very spring of all spiritual power. They are exhorted, therefore, to

repent, and do the first works {Rev. 2:5},

and threatened to lose the honor of being God's witness in the earth, if they turned not from this declining course.

I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove *thy candlestick* out of his place, except that thou repent {Rev. 2:5}.¹

Observe, that repentance and returning to the first works are the prescribed means of restoration; for we must not only know our privileges rightly to feel our responsibilities, but we must also carry out our responsibilities, if we would enjoy our privileges.

The overcomer is encouraged by the promise to

eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God {Rev. 2:7};

not in the midst of God's creation, but of God's own paradise, and may mean not only unceasing satisfaction in Christ, but to share with Him, the last Adam, the life, joy, and blessings of the new creation.

Smyrna

There is nothing in this Church calling for reproof. They were *poor* as to this world, but *rich* in faith, suffering much outward persecution and trial. One of these trials was the blasphemy of some calling themselves Jews, who were not; but the Lord assures

1. By the removal of the candlestick, we understand that the one united testimony would be no longer upheld. It need hardly be said that the candlestick has been removed, so that the members of the body of Christ are found almost everywhere divided and separated. It was because of sin that the kingdom of Israel was rent into ten tribes and two. This is very solemn.

them that He *knows* that, and also informs them that the persecution will be only for a limited time --

ten days {Rev. 2:10}.

He encourages them to

fear not {see Rev. 2:10}.

He presents Himself to them as

the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive
{Rev. 2:8},

and thus stands on the other side of death with a

crown of life {Rev. 2:10}

for any who are faithful unto death. James tells us that God has promised

the crown of life

to

those who love Him {James 1:12},

and speaks of it in connection with enduring trial.

The overcomer is encouraged and comforted with the assurance, that though he may die the *first death* for the name of Jesus, yet he

shall not be hurt of the *second death* {Rev. 2:11}.

Pergamos

We have seen that declension of love characterized the first assembly in

the things which are {Rev. 1:3, 19},

and persecution with poverty the second. In the third, seducing doctrines, carnality, and worldliness, were inside the assembly. Baalim's doctrine which so successfully damaged and overcame the Israelites, was that God's people might have association with the Moabites -- thus they lost their separate position as a people, and fell into grievous sin.

From the Lord presenting Himself as He that hath

the sharp sword with two edges {Rev. 2:12},

we might expect there was much to reprove, and so it was. Still, as usual, the Lord commends all He can first. He informs them that He knows that Pergamos is Satan's seat; has not forgotten that one of their company, Antipas, had been a faithful martyr, and that they still hold fast His name, and have not denied His faith. But there were some among them holding the doctrine of Baalim, and others holding the evil doctrines of the Nicolaitanes. The Ephesian saints were commended for hating the *deeds* of the Nicolaitanes; but, alas! there was now bad *doctrine* inside the Church. This is very sad, and Christ must deal with such things in His own house. How terrible the thought of Satan having such power in the Church on earth! some like Baalim, seeking to ensnare the sheep and lambs, to turn them to idolatry, and filthiness of flesh and spirit; others were holding an *evil doctrine* connected with "deeds" which Christ hated. Sooner or later we may expect error in "doctrine" to be connected with evil "deeds."

As we might suppose, Christ calls upon the assembly to repent, and threatens to fight against them (the holders of evil doctrine) if there be not repentance.

The overcomer is promised to feast on

the hidden manna {Rev. 2:17};

this may be the unrevealed glory and beauty of Christ, the Sustainer of His people. The

white stone {Rev. 2:17}

may teach us that he is to be publicly and specially honored before men. He is also to have a

new name, which no one knoweth saving he which receiveth it {see Rev. 2:17}.

Jacob had a new name --

Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel; for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed {Gen. 32:28}.

Whoever knew the depth and meaning of this new name like Jacob, the supplanter, who received it?

We may notice, that after this third address a promise is not given after the exhortation,

He that hath an ear, etc. {Rev. 2:29},

but before it. This divides the seven addresses into three and four. The sevens in this book are often divided in this way. It is also important to observe that each of the remaining assemblies has the coming of the Lord or His reign set before it; intimating that the principles of these four assemblies go on to the end.

Thyatira

Here we have a greater power of Satan and evil *within* the assembly; it becomes the birth-place of evil. The Lord, therefore, introduces Himself not only as the Searcher out of evil, but as mighty to judge and crush under His feet --

the Son of God, who hath His eyes like unto a flame of fire, and His feet are like fine brass {Rev. 2:18}.

There were some points in these saints worthy of commendation -- faith, love, patience, zeal, and continuance in the service of God; but there was also something very false and evil in their midst. The spirit of wicked Jezebel had been terribly at work, and brought forth children. The mother of harlots is here. Her assumption had been tolerated; her adulterous and idolatrous principles taught. Some had been led away, and had fallen into her uncleanness. Their spiritual idolatry was flagrant; not only the friendship of the world, but friendship with the world. Like as in Ahab's day, the teaching and authority of God were set aside by the idolatry and religion of the world. What is so bad as the world's religion?

"Repent!" "Repent!" was the Lord's command. She had had space given to her for repentance, and had repented not. Therefore said Jesus,

Behold I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their *deeds*. [Mark again, evil *doctrine* always leads to evil *deeds*. And I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He that searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works {Rev. 2:22, 23}.

We see here not only the Lord's hatred to evil, but His longsuffering, His readiness to accept a change of mind, and to restore, whatever be the character of evil.

But further. The Lord considers those who are ignorant, who

have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak,

and also those

who have not this doctrine,

and lays upon them

none other burden {Rev. 2:24};

that is, I suppose, no further trial than the common suffering that had come upon all the assembly through these evil things. It is helpful to notice how the Lord thus distinguishes persons in the same assembly.

The faithful are cheered with the prospect of the Lord's coming, and are exhorted to *hold fast* till He come.

The overcomer is promised to share in the rule and reign of Christ over the nations, and to know as his own personal enjoyment what he now so ardently longs for --

the Morning Star {Rev. 2:28}.

This is now the blessed hope of our hearts, and for this we wait {Rev. 22:16}.

Sardis

Dead formality generally characterized this assembly. Respectability in man's eye there might be, for they had

a name to live;

but, spiritually speaking, they were

dead {Rev. 3:1}.

Lamentable condition! With an orthodox confession and outward decency, there was a Christless, lifeless religion. This is very solemn, because some of the Lord's own people were, doubtless, involved in it. The Lord, therefore, is presented to them as the One who has all fulness of spiritual power, and gifts for edification,

having the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars {Rev. 3:1}.

He also exhorts them to

repent;

and seeks to restore, by enjoining them to remember how they have received and heard, and thus to

hold fast {Rev. 3:3};

for the way is cleansed only by taking heed thereto, according to God's word. They were exhorted also to be watchful, and to strengthen the things which remain, which are ready to die; and were reminded that like a dying branch brings no fruit to perfection, so their works, which were often begun well, were not ripened by patiently abiding in Christ.

It is well to notice that there were some exceptions to the general condition.

Thou hast a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments {Rev. 3:4}.

This is cheering. It also shows us that whatever be the general state of the Church on earth, the Lord is ever ready to strengthen and lead on any who trust Him for it; and perhaps the more so because truth has so failed in the hands of those professing its care. Such are to expect special honor and blessing from the Lord --

They shall walk with me in white; for They are worthy {Rev. 3:4}.

Surely this is very encouraging. The Lord threatening to overtake the unrepenting -- coming as a thief -- does not refer to the Lord's personal return from heaven, but to His dealing with them. Living as they were in the spirit of the world, they would be treated like the world, and as of it, by the Lord's coming

as a thief {Rev. 3:3}.

Notwithstanding the failure, the overcomer is taught to expect the bridal dress --

white raiment {see Rev. 3:4},

to find his name in the book of life, and to be publicly owned by Christ.

Philadelphia

Here there is no reproof. Though there is

little strength {Rev. 3:8},

and trial from false things -- things of Satan around, yet the Lord was with them, and saw not a little to commend. Christ greatly encourages them. He reminds them that He is holy and true, that He has the key of David (authority and power in relation to the promises made to David and his throne),

that He openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth {Rev. 3:7}.

The frequent use of the word "*my*" in this address, "*my word*," "*my name*," "*my patience*," "*my God*," seems to show that they were remarkable for personal attachment to Christ Himself.

They kept Christ's *word*. They not only read His word, but treasured it up in their hearts; often meditated on it, mixed faith with it, and esteemed it a precious treasure. This, I apprehend, is keeping His word. The Psalmist said:

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee (Psa. 119:11).

They also kept Christ's *name*. They did not deny it. That name was above every name to them. They did not prostitute it for worldly purposes. To whatever bad things men now attach the name of Christ, these saints did not do so. It was sacred to them. They gathered together *in His name*, and felt something of the holy responsibilities connected with the confession of that name. They pleaded in prayer that name. They laboured in that name. They confessed that name. They well knew that at the name of Jesus every knee would yet bow, and every tongue confess, to the glory of God the Father.

Christ assures them that He has set before them

an open door {Rev. 3:8},

and that, however they may be tried by those who are of the synagogue of Satan, yet *no man can shut that door*. He also promises that those who now distress them shall yet pay them

honor, and know that He has loved them. This we judge will take place at our Lord's appearing. He keeps bright before them His speedy return from heaven, and promises the keepers of His word of patience,² deliverance from, or out of, the hour of temptation -- the great tribulation that is coming upon all the world. He also exhorts them still to

hold fast {see Rev. 3:11}

what they have -- His word and name -- and to beware of men, who will seek to hinder, their devotedness and zeal for Christ, and rob them, not of

the crown of life,

which seems to be the portion of all believers, but of --

the crown of righteousness {2 Tim. 4:8},

which those may expect who *love* His appearing. Such can spend and be spent for His glory.

However weak and oppressed here, the overcomer is promised the place of strength and honor in the presence of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and write upon him the name of my God, etc. {see Rev. 3:12}

Laodicea

There is nothing to commend here. It is full of indecision and indifference --

neither cold nor hot {Rev. 3:15}.

Respectability before men, selfishness, worldly prosperity, and independence of Christ, characterized Laodicea. There was no felt need, and Christ was outside the door, obliged to knock for admission. He was ready to spue them out of His mouth. A terrible state, indeed, and yet a faithful picture of the conclusion of this dispensation. Christ presents Himself to them as

the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God {Rev. 3:14}

-- the decided One, who always said Amen to God's word, and faithfully carried it out; and being the Head of the new creation, He is worthy of the affection and service of all His people, and is almighty to judge as well as to bless.

The Church of Smyrna was poor in earthly goods, but rich in faith. Laodicea was rich in earthly possessions, but most miserably poor spiritually. We have here an assembly which is content to have Christ outside the door. Is it possible? Alas! it is too true. Orthodox doctrine held inside, perhaps; but Christ Himself neither the object of the affections, nor practically owned as the Lord. They would have been ashamed to say so, but the fact was, they could get on very well without Christ's presence or power. This is fearful, but it is no uncommon sin of these last days. These elements seem now to be rapidly growing. Still Christ did not give Laodicea up. His patient grace as wonderfully brought out. He offers counsel, in case there should be *one* only in the whole assembly who hath *an ear to hear*. Get true riches, says He;

gold tried in the fire;

a priceless garment -- the bridal dress,

white raiment;

and the only anointing that can profit you, spiritual unction --

Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see {Rev. 3:18}.

Then they would be "rich," then their "nakedness" would be covered, then their "blind" eyes would see; for their hearts and minds would be fully set upon the beauty and work of Christ. Here alone true riches can be found. Happy those who can say,

"Jesus shall our treasure be,
Now and through eternity."

The Lord chastens *as many as He loves*, to bring their hearts off these carnal, fading things to Himself, and says that if there be only *one* person in the whole assembly that will

open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me {Rev. 3:20}.

What blessed encouragement this is to any *individual* saint who desires to own and serve Christ fully in an evil time.

The overcomer is promised the highest thing that Christ can give -- to sit with Him on His throne.

We now come to the end of the second part of the Revelation,

The things which are {Rev. 1:19}.

We have seen, in thus briefly considering the letters to the seven assemblies, all the general features of gradual declension and falling away that have marked the history of the Church on earth.

1. There was decline of affection to Christ.
2. Outward persecution.
3. Seduction and worldliness.
4. The mother of harlots -- Popery.
5. Formality and deadness, with outward respectability, and a faithful few -- Protestantism.
6. Revival of evangelical truth, effort for the glory of Christ, and obedience to His word.
7. Christless religion with worldly prosperity.

Can we doubt, then, that Christ gives us here a prophetic sketch of the course of the assembly on earth, that He furnishes us with instruction as to corporate and individual responsibility, and reveals His mind touching all the principles of good and evil brought before us?

In the next chapter we shall enter upon the things which shall be hereafter, or after these things. This division occupies the remainder of the book. It is subdivided into several sections. The first is, The throne of God in heaven, and the, Lamb taking the book.

2. Patiently waiting with Christ for His coming.

Chapters 4 and 5: The Throne of God in Heaven, And The Lamb Taking The Book

Chapter 4

The apostle now writes the things which will succeed the course of the Assembly upon earth --

the things which must be after these things {see Rev. 4:1}.

The scene is in heaven. God's throne is the center around which all is clustered. It is no longer Christ judging assemblies, but we see saints in heaven, and we have the counsels of God and the judgment of His throne in relation to the dwellers upon earth. The fourth and fifth chapters give us an introduction to the prophetic judgments. They may be read together; the former shows us the throne of God as Creator of all things, the latter the throne of God in relation to redemption. The Lamb is pronounced alone worthy to carry out the Divine counsels.

John says, After these things a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice -- that is, the trumpet-like sound which called his attention to the vision in the first chapter -- now says,

Come up hither, and I will show thee things which must be hereafter,

or, more properly,

after these things {Rev. 4:1}.

The same words are translated

after these things,

in chapters 18:1 and 19:1, and are intended, I believe; to show us what takes place after those

that are Christ's at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23}

have left the earth. We do not get the taking up of the saints in the Revelation, because the distinctive calling of the Church is not the subject of the book: this is clearly taught in the epistles of Paul. After the Church of God has finished its course on earth, the saints are seen in heaven, in holy worship, and in immediate and unchanging connection with the throne of God.

We are again told that the apostle was

in the Spirit {Rev. 4:2},

to remind us that we need the anointed eye, and power of the Holy Ghost, to perceive anything according to the mind of God. May we, too, be "in the Spirit," while we further meditate on the deep things of God contained in this blessed book.

John says,

A throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne {Rev. 4:2}.

No account is given of Him who sat upon the throne, further than

He was like a jasper and a sardine stone {Rev. 4:3};

for no human language can describe the glory of the Majesty in the heavens. In the latter part of the book we have

the throne of God and of the Lamb {Rev. 22:1, 3}.

The

rainbow round about the throne

bright and beautiful,

in sight like unto an emerald {Rev. 4:3},

tells us that the throne is set in relation to earth, and that He who set His bow in the cloud, as the token of the covenant that He would never again destroy the earth with water, is the faithful covenant-keeping God.

Before anything further is described, *twenty-four elders* are seen round about the throne, sitting on twenty-four seats or thrones. This is most blessed.³ They represent the heavenly saints -- those who

are Christ's at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23}.

We see them as raised ones in glory, seated on thrones, in perfect rest and blessing. They sit on thrones, as having bodies, and are not disembodied spirits, as some have supposed. Their pilgrimage is ended. The fight of faith is over. The wilderness is passed. The race is run. Their course is finished. Having suffered with Christ, they now sit in kingly dignity, made nigh to God by His precious blood. Each has a *golden crown*, and sits covered with *white raiment*, and they all *worship*, and *sing the new song*. Whatever changes occur, their place is always near the throne, for this is their home. They are known as elders until the marriage of the Lamb, when we read of

the bride, the Lamb's wife {Rev. 21:9},

and also of the

blessed,

who are

called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb {Rev. 19:9}.

The *throne* is not, as it is *now*, a throne of grace, but of judgment, out of which proceed

lightnings, and thunderings, and voices {Rev. 4:5}.

3. Twenty-four is a representative number, for we see in the next chapter that they are out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Before Jesus comes for His saints, God's throne is known as a mercy-seat, welcoming the chief of sinners to God through Jesus and His precious blood; and

“While the lamp holds out to burn,
The vilest sinner may return,”

for Jesus still says,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37},

etc. But when the last member of the

one new man {Eph. 2:15}

is called out and united to the risen Head in heaven, and the saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air, then the aspect of the throne changes, and God begins to assert His right to rule the universe, to chasten and judge men, and to clear the heavens and the earth for His Son -- the rightful heir and Lord of all. When this is done, and millennial blessing established, then, instead of

lightnings, and thunderings, and voices {Rev. 4:5}

coming out of the throne, there will be

a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb {Rev. 22:1}.

Judgment and curse then will be the exception rather than the rule. The fourth chapter, therefore, presents the aspect of God's throne to us as neither agreeing with the present nor millennial times, but it tells of a period of transition between the taking up of the heavenly saints, and the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth, by His personal return with His saints.

The seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God {Rev. 4:5},

are in strict keeping with the earthly character of the book: for it is not the Holy Ghost as one Spirit dwelling in the Church, as we get in Ephesians, but rather the manifold operations of God's Spirit through creation.

The sea of glass, like unto crystal {Rev. 4:6},

may show the solid and everlasting transparency and pity before God's throne in heaven. We may notice, that in this fourth chapter the sea of glass is unoccupied, but after Antichrist has been revealed, and those who would not worship the beast and his image are put to death, a company is seen standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God (Rev. 15:2), who get the victory, by resurrection.

The four *beasts*, or living creatures, are not introduced to us *with* the elders. We have first the elders described, then the characteristics of the throne, next the sea of glass, and then we are told that

in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts (or living creatures), full of eyes before and behind {Rev. 4:6}.

Unlike the elders, they bear no mark of redemption, and their occupation in connection with opening the seals, and the vials of wrath, mark them out, I would suggest, as a class of intelligent creatures who carry out the commands of God in His governmental and providential arrangements. They answer generally to the description of the seraphim that Isaiah beheld

hundreds of years before Christ came, when he saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. He says,

Above it stood the seraphim; each one had six wings: with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory (Isa. 6:2, 3).

And in our chapter we are told,

The four living creatures had each of them six wings about him, and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come {Rev. 4:8}.

How different the action of the twenty-four elders: they get off their thrones, fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and *worship* Him that liveth for ever and ever, and *cast their crowns* before the throne, saying,

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created {Rev. 4:11}.

This is very blessed, for it tells us that God will be acknowledged and worshipped in heaven as the Creator of the universe, however blasphemed and denied on earth. The time is not far distant when men will not only worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, but will openly deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ; when infidelity and strong delusion will envelop men's minds, and the

mystery of iniquity {2 Thess. 2:7},

which now worketh, shall spread itself to a world-wide extent (Rev. 13:8). Then the words of Jesus will have their full accomplishment,

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not; *if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive* (John 5:43).

Men will be given up to strong delusion. Nevertheless, God is, and He has created all things, and for His pleasure they are and were created. Thus the fourth chapter ends by showing us that God is worshipped in heaven as the sovereign Creator of all things. The fifth chapter ends by every creature praising and blessing God, *and also the Lamb*, because it is by the blood of His cross that creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption.

“Soon will creation join in one,
To bless the sacred name
Of Him who sits upon the throne,
And to adore the Lamb.”

Chapter 5

The throne of God having been presented to us in the fourth chapter, in relation to creation, and God fully owned and worshipped in heaven as the sovereign Creator of all things, the fifth chapter opens with the announcement of a book seen in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, written within and on the back side, sealed with seven seals. A strong angel proclaims with a loud voice,

Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof? {Rev. 5:2}.

This question then discloses the solemn fact, that no one in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, had any worthiness or title for such work, nor even to *look upon* the book. No mere creature can meet God on the ground of worthiness, or lay claim or title to anything in His presence. The brightest and highest intelligences of God's creation have nothing but what they have received -- no beauty but what God has put upon them -- no righteousness but as formed by their Maker. The idea of *worthiness* is connected with something meritorious having been accomplished. The spotless angels, mighty in strength, which surround the throne of heaven, have no title to anything; for all they have is given. Not a single creature in the whole universe, then, was able to respond to the angel's question; and the discovery that no one could be found able even to *look upon* the book so filled the apostle's heart with grief, that he

wept much {Rev. 5:4}.

John did not see any one able to rescue creation out of the hands of the spoiler, or worthy to execute the judgments of God.

The elders, however, who had just been worshiping with adoring gratitude, and had sat calm and unmoved upon their thrones amid the lightnings, and thunderings, and voices, now manifest their spiritual intelligence; and we see it repeatedly in this book. They are acquainted with the mind of God. The question,

Who is worthy? {Rev. 5:2}

had long ago been settled in their minds. It had been their joy to take the crowns of gold from off their blood-washed brows, and, in lowly prostration, cast them before the throne. Great and wonderful as the work of God in creation was,

when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy {Job 38:7},

they knew that the stupendous work of eternal redemption would stand in unfading beauty when heaven and earth shall have passed away. The crucified but risen Son of God could alone answer the question of the strong angel. His sinner-loving, sacrificial death upon the cross makes known who is worthy. The unutterable sorrows of the Holy One, willingly

made to be sin for us {see 2 Cor. 5:21}

upon the tree, so fully glorified God, and redeemed sinful man, that He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and rightly exalted to the highest seat of dignity, power, and glory, that God could give. This tells us of One who is able and worthy to take the book of God's counsels, loose the seals, and execute God's judgments.

For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed *all judgment* unto the Son; . . . and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man {John 5:22, 27}.

The rejected Messiah -- the risen, glorified Son of man, then, is Lord of all {Acts 10:36};

for He is worthy. This the elders well knew: one of them, therefore, called out to the distressed apostle, and said,

Weep not: behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, *hath prevailed* to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof {Rev. 5:5}.

The person of Christ is here blessedly set forth by the elder -- His Godhead, as "the Root of David" -- the Creator of all things; His manhood, as made of the seed of David, according to the flesh, and of the tribe of Judah; mighty now as a lion to trample in His fury upon the prey, though once on earth the meek and lowly Lamb, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. ⁴

It was to this blessed Jesus that the weeping apostle was directed; for whatever be the sorrow that oppresses our hearts, there is a balm in Jesus to relieve us. When John faints and quails at His feet, as we saw in the first chapter, it is knowing Jesus as the living One, who was dead and is alive again, and that for evermore, that revives and cheers him for his onward service. If tears of sorrow run plentifully over his cheeks, when he finds none worthy to even look upon the book in the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne, it is a sight of Jesus that again dries up his tears. And so with us: we may be assured, that whatever makes us sad, it is only having to do with Jesus that can cheer and comfort us; and the contemplation of His spotless person, His finished work, His all-cleansing blood, His unchangeable priesthood, His sympathising heart, His almighty power, His advocacy in heaven, and His speedy coming, will calm our fears, comfort our hearts, elevate our minds, chase our sorrows, and fill us with hope. Nothing will compensate for a lack of personal communion with the Lord Jesus.

"From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sweet retreat --
'Tis found before the mercy-seat.

"There is a place where Jesus sheds
The oil of gladness on our heads;
A place than all besides more sweet --
It is the heavenly mercy-seat"

John says,

I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb *as it had been slain* {Rev. 5:6};

showing us that it was by the blood that Jesus *prevailed* to open the book, and that the cross is so precious to God that He has transplanted it, as it were, to His own blessed presence in the midst of the throne of heaven. There the Lamb is seen

as it had been slain {Rev. 5:6},

not now in weakness, but in power; and that, too, in all the perfection of intelligence and wisdom, as we learn from His

having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth {Rev. 5:6}.
(Compare Zech. 4:10.)

Thus we see Christ, the

power of God and the wisdom of God {1 Cor. 1:24},
the Lion of the tribe of Juda {Rev. 5:5},

4. The allusion here to David and Judah also shows our Lords' relationship to Israel; for, as we shall soon see, they are to have blessing in the earth.

standing in the midst of the throne of heaven,

a Lamb as it had been slain; . . . and He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne {Rev. 5:6, 7}.

We must not forget that the scene is in heaven; Jesus is there, and the elders, representing the heavenly saints who have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air are also there, before the seals are opened, or one of the apocalyptic judgments poured out. Such a glorious event, then, as the Lamb's title to take the book being ratified at the throne of God, called all intelligences to fall down with adoring reverence, as indeed all creatures of the universe shall yet do; and the honor put upon the blood of the Lamb by the throne of judgment and justice was like a signal for the redeemed triumphantly to celebrate the work and worth of Jesus.

When He had taken the book, the four living creatures and fourand-twenty elders fell down before THE LAMB {Rev. 5:8}.

Spotless Lamb! Precious blood of Christ! God only can fully estimate its value, or give to Jesus the glory and honor of which He is worthy. We who have *felt* the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and the guilt of a sinful heart, can in measure apprehend it; for we know that it was

“For *love* of us He bled,
And all in torture died;
'Twas *love* that bowed His fainting ^shead,
And oped His gushing side.”

A beloved brother says,

It is by His blood the Lamb here prevails to take the book, or the title to the inheritance. The Lion of the tribe of Judah is seen in the person of the Lamb that was slain. His blood was His title. His blood made Him the *purchaser* of the inheritance; He is now its *redeemer*, as the prevailing Lion of Judah. And consequently, as the Lamb, He is the spring and fountain of all the resulting glories of the kingdom. Extensive virtues of the blood of Jesus! It has been the object of faith -- the ground of worship -- the title of security -- the bond of covenants -- from the beginning. By it Abel was an accepted worshiper, and even Adam himself a believing reconciled sinner. By it Abraham had the covenant of promise made with him. By it the people of the Lord dwelt safe while the sword of judgment passed over. By it the veil of the temple was rent -- all distance between God and sinners removed. By it the trumpet of the jubilee might give forth its gladdening notes; for on the day of atonement they were to sound it. By it the saints redeemed from earth, and seated in heaven, look to return and reign over the earth, in the train and honour of that slain Lamb, whose blood, but whose blood only, has all this prevalency in it.

Thus, there is no blessing or dignity, nothing of either grace or glory, which this blood cannot command for us poor sinners; but there is no other price for anything, no other ground or title for blessing but itself. It does everything, and it does it alone. Adam lost both *himself* and his *estate*; he became a sinner in his own person, and also an exile from

Eden. But the blood of Jesus, God's Lamb that was slain, restores all.

Both the living creatures and elders *fall down* before the Lamb; but

having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints {Rev. 5:8},

we understand to be expressive of the elders only. Some have judged, from the living creatures and elders appearing both to sing as redeemed ones, that the both companies together represent the heavenly saints. If it were so, it is still clear that the Church would be removed before the apocalyptic judgments begin, or the Man of sin is revealed; for the living creatures are not only officially engaged at the opening of the first four seals (Rev. 6:1-8), but also, in Rev. 15, we find one of them giving seven vials to the seven angels, and the first is poured out upon the earth in judgment on those who had the mark of the beast, and worshipped his image (Rev. 16:2).

The living creatures, however, in no other part of the Revelation bear any mark of redemption; and in this chapter, after all have been ascribing praise to God and the Lamb,

the four living creatures said, Amen {Rev. 5:14}.

Not only too are they generally seen in separate action from the elders, but, as we have noticed, assist in carrying out the judgments on the earth; and, instead of manifesting the discernment and worship characteristic of the elders (except in Rev. 19, when God is worshipped, not for His redeeming love, but for judging the great whore), they repeat incessantly the cry,

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty {Rev. 4:8}!

That they are created beings, and not mere symbolic expressions of the attributes of God, we judge from their giving thanks to God, falling down, giving vials to the angels, and corresponding so nearly to the seraphim of Isaiah, the living creatures of Ezekiel, and the cherubim that guarded the tree of life with a flaming sword.

The elders, however, who are not disembodied spirits, but have glorified bodies, remind us constantly of redemption. They have *crowns*, they sit on *thrones*, are *worshippers*, clothed in *white raiment*, abide near the throne of God, and are characterized by *spiritual intelligence*; for they know who is worthy to open the book, who they are that come out of the great tribulation, and give thanks when the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. ⁶

We suggest, then, that the elders only

sing *a new song*, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation {Rev. 5:9}.

Thus we see that death is remembered where death cannot enter. It is generally admitted that the 10th verse should be altered to --

5. {It is suggested that the word “fainting” is not appropriate. We must keep in mind that He bowed His head as His own, deliberate act, in giving up His life -- John 10:17, 18).}

6. The difference between the elders and living creatures will be made very clear to any who will write out, in parallel columns, all the passages in the Revelation in which they are mentioned.

And hast made *them* unto our God kings and priests, or a kingdom of priests; and *they* shall reign upon the earth (Rev. 5:10):

{and made them to our God kings and priests; and they shall reign over the earth {Rev. 5:10, New Trans., JND}}.

that is, the elders are in heaven, the prayers of Jewish saints (Dan. 7:21) on earth have ascended to the throne, and are as vials or bowls full of incense, and, though now in trouble, they shall yet be a kingdom of priests, according to Exod. 19:6, and reign upon the earth.

As God has always had a witness in the earth, we expect that soon after the heavenly saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, God's Spirit will begin to inspire a remnant among the nation with a proper Jewish hope, and move them to resume the preaching of "the gospel of the kingdom"; and it is those who are referred to here. I say, resume the preaching of "the gospel of the kingdom"; for though it was preached by our Lord and the twelve, as recorded in Matt. 10, and was interrupted, yet it must be preached as a witness to all nations before the end come (Matt. 24:14), that is, the end of the age, when the Lord will come *with* His saints.

Myriads of angels, forming a circle outside those who have just been singing, also say with a loud voice.

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing {Rev. 5:12}.

They do not say, who redeemed us, but ascribe seven-fold worthiness to Him who died upon the cross. The circle of praise still widens. The vision leads the apostle on into the millennial time, when the result of Christ's death will be known and celebrated by every creature, when everything that hath breath will praise the Lord. The chapter concludes with the "Amen" of the four living creatures, and the worship of the four-and-twenty elders.

The praise and worship and testimony of all creatures connected with heaven and earth to the glory of God and the Lamb, are brought out on the Lamb's taking the book out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.

"Joyful now, the full creation
Rests in undisturbed repose;
Blest in Jesus' full salvation,
Sorrow now, nor thralldom knows."

The next chapter opens to us the loosing of the seals, and the results.

Chapters 6 and 8:1-5: The Opening of The Seven Seals

{Introduction}

We must beware lest the study of prophecy serve only to amuse the intellect. This is man's way of abusing God's revelation of the future. Unfolded to us by the Spirit, the knowledge of the future sheds an important light on the present, and we see all in connection with our Lord Jesus. This separates us unto God. It draws the affections and desires to heaven -- to Christ. As the Cross of Christ is the outflowing of all blessing from God to man, so Christ exalted and coming again is the center of all prophetic teaching. Prophecy is connected with Christ, and therefore concerns us, for we are His. They who know this see all prophecy in relation to Christ. We are only happy in tracing the prophetic word step by step in companionship with Him to whom all must bow, and thus the affections and desires are attracted to the Lord Himself. Watchfulness, then, is needed, as well as prayerfulness, lest we tread these holy paths with the mind of a politician, rather than with the heart of an adoring worshiper of our blessed Lord Jesus.

Before entering upon the Apocalyptic seals, let us look at some other Scriptures which seem to me to bear upon this part of the Revelation.

The well known prophecy of Daniel's seventy weeks has not yet been fully accomplished. The sixty-ninth week terminated with the cutting off of Messiah (Dan. 9:26). We read that

seventy weeks (or hebdomads) are determined upon *thy people*, and upon *thy holy city* {Dan. 9:24}.

The prophecy, therefore, refers to Daniel's people -- the Jewish nation, and the city of Jerusalem. The Church of God is not found here. One week only -- the seventieth -- remains to be accounted for, and observe, it comes in after the rejection of Christ, because he was

cut off {Dan. 9:26}

at the end of the sixty-ninth week. This one week -- one seven, hebdomad, or seven years -- is divided into two halves. For

he [the prince, Dan. 9:26] shall confirm the covenant with many for one week; and *in the midst of the week*,

i.e. at the end of three years and a half, or forty and two months, he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate {Dan. 9:27}.

This, then, is Daniel's prophecy *concerning his own people*, of the last of the seventy weeks. *Now*, judicial blindness rests upon that people. Having killed the heir, God's beloved Son, He has not only burned up their city, but has scattered them over the face of the earth, until the elect from the Gentiles are fully gathered in to

God. Though natural branches be broken off, God is able to graft them in again, and *so* all Israel shall be saved; for they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. Prior to that, this seventieth week must have its accomplishment; for the sorrow, distress, and the abomination that maketh desolate, must precede the nation's blessing. It is, therefore, between the sixty-ninth and this retarded seventieth week that the calling out of the Church takes place. Paul says it is a

mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations {Col. 1:26},

and was

not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit {Eph. 3:5}.

It is no marvel, then, that Daniel should make no mention of *the Church*, and that his prophecy should refer to *his own people*. Christ being rejected by Israel, and received at the right hand of God as

the firstborn from the dead {Col. 1:18},

the firstborn among many brethren {Rom. 8:29},

we get a new order of God's actings; viz. the Holy Ghost is come down to indwell and baptize believers into one body, in union with an ascended Christ, whom God gave to be

Head over all things to the Church, which is His body {Eph. 1:22, 23}.

This action of the Holy Ghost goes on till every member of the one new man {Eph. 2:15}

is called out, till we all come unto a PERFECT MAN. Then the Lord Jesus will come and receive us unto Himself. After this, the Lord will turn again to His ancient people and city, fulfilling Daniel's seventieth week, with all its sorrows, and at His appearing in glory bring in the full restoration and blessing of the nation. (Compare Acts 15:14-17.)

The question may be fairly asked, Do we get any allusion to this seventieth week in any of our Lord's discourses? I reply, Is it likely that a period of such importance to Israel would be unnoticed by our Lord in His intercourse with that people? Let us turn to the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. At the end of the twenty-third chapter, Messiah is virtually

cut off {Dan. 9:26}.

He says,

O Jerusalem . . . how oft would I have gathered *thy children* together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and *ye* would not! Behold, *your house* is left unto you desolate! For I say unto you, *Ye* shall not see me henceforth

till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord {Matt. 23:37-39}.

As to the city, the beautiful temple must be razed to the ground; for God must now deal with his people in solemn chastisement.

There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down {Matt. 24:2}.

The disciples then say,

Tell us when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age? {Matt. 24:3}.

Where, I ask, should we expect a prophetic discourse parallel to the seventieth week of Daniel, to fit in so well as here? for it begins with Messiah virtually “cut off,” and ends with Messiah coming in power and great glory (Matt. 24:30), to put all enemies under His feet, which we know, from other Scriptures, occurs at the end of this week (2 Thess. 2:3; Rev. 19:11). If this view be correct, we should expect to see some corresponding points between Daniel’s prophecy and our Lord’s discourse: and so we do. The prophet speaks of the Man of sin, desolation, and abomination, until the consummation. Our Lord, after speaking of false Christs and sorrows, mentions

the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet (Matt. 24:15),

followed by Christ’s personal return in glory, and the redemption of Israel, as the parable of the fig-tree suggests. Moreover, while we are distinctly told that Daniel speaks of his own people, our Lord gives locality to his prophecy, by saying,

Then let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains (Matt. 24:16):

and we may say of nationality also, for it is followed by,

Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day ⁷{Matt. 24:20}.

There seems, then, good reason for identifying our Lord’s prophetic discourse, in Matt. 24:1-30, with the seventieth week of Daniel; and there are also remarkable points of similarity between this chapter in Matthew and the seven seals of the Revelation. The prophetic incidents, and also the order of their narration, strikingly coincide. In Matt. 24 we have:

1. False Christs, deceiving many.
2. Wars, and rumours of wars.
3. Famines.
4. Pestilences.
5. Afflictions, many killed, and the gospel of the kingdom preached.
6. The sun darkened, the moon not shining, the powers of the heavens shaken.
7. The sign of the Son of man in heaven, and His coming in the clouds with power and great glory.

In the seven seals of Revelation we have:

1. The emblem of the false Christ having great power and success.

2. War -- peace taken from the earth.

3. Famine.

4. Death, and hell following.

5. Souls under the altar crying for vengeance, for being killed for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held.

6. The sun black, the moon red, stars falling, and the heavens departing.

7. Silence in heaven, voices, lightnings, and an earthquake, connected, as I believe, with our Lord’s personal return to the earth with His mighty angels, in flaming fire.

The seven seals being opened may co-extend with the contents of the whole book which the Lamb took out of the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne; and if so, whatever period of this time the trumpets and vials occupy, they may be regarded as terminating at the same time ⁸-- the personal return of Christ with His saints in judgment. The end, therefore, of each of these series of judgments would be very similar; and so it is. The seventh seal is connected with

thunderings and lightnings and an earthquake (Rev. 8:5);

the seventh trumpet is also marked by

lightnings, and voices and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail (Rev. 11:19);

and the seventh vial has also

voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake (Rev. 16:18).

It is remarkable also, that at the termination of each series there is reference made to the temple of God in heaven. It is quite true that we do not get the temple mentioned in the *seventh seal*, but we find some of the well-known furniture of the temple spoken of, such as the altar, censer, incense (Rev. 8:3). At the sound of the *seventh trumpet*, it is said that

the temple of God was opened in heaven (Rev. 11:19);

and when the *seventh vial* was poured out, we are told,

There came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, saying, It is done (Rev. 16:17).

There are reasons, then, for considering the seven sealed book to contain all the apocalyptic judgments, and to embrace the whole period from the Lamb’s taking the book till the heavens are opened, and Christ comes forth in royal majesty and power to put all enemies under His feet. We must not forget that the “elders,” or heavenly saints, are sitting on thrones in heaven in glorified bodies, before the Lamb takes the book or opens one of the seals. It is well also to observe, that the elders do not appear in connection with opening the sea’s, but the living creatures only are engaged in the first four of these sorrowful enactments. We afterwards see one of them also occupied in *giving* to the seven angels seven golden vials fall of the wrath of God (Rev. 15:7); and

8. {In some valuable writings on the Revelation, insufficient attention has been paid to Rev. 15:1, which shows that the seven vials are the *last* plagues. Thus, the seven bowls follow the trumpets, issuing out of the seventh trumpet, as the seven trumpets issue out of the breaking of the seventh seal. The opening of seventh seal completely opens the roll and brings the action to the middle of the 70th week, and the seventh vial brings to the appearing of the Lord in glory. See also note 9, below.}

7. Sabbath day, strictly speaking, never belonged to any nation but Israel.

the first being poured out, there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them that worshipped his image (Rev. 16:2).

Beloved in the Lord, these solemn realities will soon come to pass. How terrible the thought, that living men and women around us shall so shortly feel the hand of God in judgment. *Now* God bears with man's wickedness, and preaches peace, through the blood of Christ, to the vilest of sinners; but *then* He will begin His strange work, and make men feel that justice and judgment are the habitation of His throne. How godly and earnest with souls a consideration of these things should make us!

The First Seal

The rider here has been thought by many to be Christ, because He is sitting upon a white horse, and is so successful. Hence they speak of the Lord's now going forth in His gospel chariot conquering and to conquer. Blessed be God, Christ does subdue proud and rebellious hearts to Himself; but it is not by the bow, or any other carnal weapon, but by

the word of His grace {Acts 14:3, 20:32}

It is His love, His redeeming, exhaustless love! This, this alone subdued and won us to Himself; and

"True pleasures abound
In the rapturous sound;
And whoever hath found it
Hath Paradise found.

My Jesus to know,
And feel *His love* flow,
'Tis life everlasting,
'Tis heaven below."

That the rider in this first seal cannot be Christ is further proved, because He is seen as having His place *in heaven*, at this very time, as the Lamb opening the seal, while the vision of the white horse and its rider relates to *the earth*. It is quite true, that when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven, He is presented to us as riding a white horse: but then heaven will be opened; He will be publicly manifested; there will be no possibility of mistaking Him; for

every eye shall see Him {Rev. 1:7}.

His saints also will follow in the train; and judgments under the iron rod of the Lord's personal reign will go forth. Whereas the opening of the other seals that follow this one show that the judgments are of a providential character, and not immediately from the Lord's own presence.

When the Lamb in heaven opens this seal, a
noise of thunder

is heard, for it is God dealing in righteousness, not in grace; and one of the living creatures says,

Come and see {Rev. 6:1}!

or rather,

Come,

and not

Come *and see*;

that is, one of the living creatures calls the rider on a white horse, and he immediately appears on the scene. The seer then says,

I saw, and behold a *white horse*; and he that sat on him had a *bow*; and a *crown* was given unto him: and he went forth *conquering*, and to *conquer* {Rev. 1:2}.

This is evidently a mighty subduing power put forth in the earth, and not only successful, but increasingly so; and accomplished not in man's ordinary mode of overcoming, as by the sword, but by the exertion of a more quiet yet more powerful influence. He is shown as having a crown given unto him, not many diadems of power and glory, which Jesus will wear when He is revealed from heaven, but a wreath, a chaplet, such as men award to each other, like the conqueror's wreath at the public games.

The question is, What does this mean? May it not be the mighty, subduing anti-christian power which is to arise after the Church has been removed? The apostle Paul speaks of something now hindering the full development of the

mystery of iniquity {2 Thess. 2:7};

but when the hindrance is removed,

then shall that wicked [or lawless] one be revealed . . . whose coming is after the working of Satan with *all power*, and signs, and lying wonders {2 Thess. 2:8, 9}

By the rider on the white horse, then, in this first seal, we understand the mighty anti-christian deceiving and subduing power which our Lord foretold:

There shall arise false Christs, and shall *deceive many* {see Matt. 24:24}.

He rides not only a horse, the emblem of power in the earth; but as Satan always tries to deceive men by imitating God, this rider is on a *white horse*, because Christ will be symbolized as on a *white horse*; as Christ will appear wearing many crowns or diadems, this great deceiving power will have a crown given to it; and as Christ will subdue all to Himself, this mimic of Satan will go forth conquering and to conquer; and, alas!

with *all power*, and *signs*, and *lying wonders*.

Then God will send men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. *Then* will our Lord's words be fulfilled:

If another shall come in *his own name*, *him ye will receive* {John 5:43}.

What a solemn lesson this reads us; for we are told that

the mystery of iniquity *doth already work* {2 Thess. 2:7}.

It is around us on almost every side! How important to distinguish now between truth and error, between the holy principles and ways of Christ, and the mimicry and counterfeits of Satanic deception. Surely Satan is the deceiver of the world, as well as the accuser of the brethren. How we need to abide in God's presence at the blood-sprinkled mercy seat! How much we require of the anointing with spiritual eye-salve, to distinguish between things which differ! How we need to visit Calvary, and to feed on the flesh and blood of the Son of man, to be strengthened against the devil's cheats! Let none of us suppose that bare knowledge of the letter of Scripture is enough for this. Nothing less than abiding in the love of God -- communion with the Father, and with His Son

Jesus Christ -- will enable us to keep our garments unspotted from the world, or to avoid the snares of the fowler. May God graciously use the knowledge of these

things which must shortly come to pass {Rev. 1:1},
to make us watchful, prayerful, earnest, and humble saints!

The Second Seal

Here we have another rider, but the horse is *red*, indicative of a blood-shedding power. *Now* God is revealing Himself to sinful men as the God of peace. He commands the gospel of His grace to be preached to every creature, and saves to the uttermost all that come unto Him by Christ; but *then peace will be taken from the earth*, a mighty influence will be exerted by the sword, and men will slay one another. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. It is a time of

wars and rumours of wars {Matt. 24:6; Mark 13:7},

but the end of the age is not yet. *Now* we feel what a mercy outward peace is, however men deceive and flatter themselves with cries of peace and safety; *then*, alas! when the

great sword {Rev. 6:4}

is put into the hand of this representative warrior, peace will be taken from the earth, and men will kill and slay one another. Surely this forcibly reminds us how dependent we are on God, for outward peace!

The Third Seal

Now follows what we might expect -- God's judgment in the way of *scarcity* or *famine*. It is a further scene of mourning and sorrow, as indicated by a *black* horse, and the rider having a pair of balances in his hand. The voice in the midst of the four living creatures says,

A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny {Rev. 6:6}:

this shows a dearth or scarcity of the staff of life. "A penny," or *denarius*, would be the amount of a labourer's daily earnings, and "a measure of wheat," or a *chaenix* of wheat, the smallest daily allowance granted to a slave. It has been thought by some, that because the barley and wheat harvests are earlier than the ingathering of the fruit of the vine and olive, this judgment of dearth would be limited to the two former; and therefore it is said,

Hurt not [or injure not] the oil and the wine {Rev. 6:6}.

However this may be, it is clear that we are to understand that it is a scarcity of the necessities of life, a time of *famine*.

The Fourth Seal

The judgments increase in severity. When the fourth seal is opened, a *pale* horse appears, its rider is *Death*, and *Hell* follows. This is very appalling: Death and Hell, or Hades, are afterwards cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:14). The different coloured horses and riders are clearly symbolic of a general character of things rather than of individuals. This fourth seal brings out God's

four sore judgments

as Ezekiel calls them, over a limited portion of the earth. Ezekiel, however, speaks of them in relation to Israel:

For thus saith the Lord God, How much more when I send *my four sore judgments* upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast (Ezek. 14:21).

What we are to understand by the judgments of this fourth seal being limited to a

fourth part of the earth {Rev. 6:8}

I know not; but it is terrible to think what power and authority will then be given to Death and Hades, to kill

with the *sword*, and with *hunger*, and with *death*, and with the *beasts* of the earth {Rev. 6:8}.

It is a time of distress of nations, with perplexity, of famines and pestilences in divers places; and these are but

the beginning of sorrows {Matt. 24:8}.

Thus we see, after the saints have been caught up to meet the Lord at His coming, and are seated on thrones in heaven, as represented by the twenty-four elders, that the first four seals are opened, and we have a mighty subduing antichristian power, war, famine, and God's

four sore judgments.

They are not extraordinary in their character, but preparatory dealings of God before the wrath of the Lamb. We may notice that in each of these four seals, one of the four living creatures is officially engaged, which is not the case in the opening of the other three.

The Fifth Seal

This seal discloses something very different. It is a distinct notice, that there have been saints on the earth since the rapture, some of whom have yielded up their lives as sacrifices to God for the truth's sake. The apostle John says,

I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held {Rev. 6:9}.

This is very solemn. The removal of the saints from earth to heaven at the coming of the Lord, though it excite alarm and distress for a time, does not improve mankind. Soon again the enmity of the carnal mind is manifested; for His servants with a new testimony are martyred for *the word of God*.

We saw, in the fifth chapter, that some persons were praying on earth, while the elders were in heaven, having bowls full of incense, which are said to be

the prayers of saints {Rev. 5:8}:

Though "saints," these are not "the Church," indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and baptized into "one body"; but after the Church has been caught up to meet the Lord at His coming, the Spirit of God will move the hearts of a remnant of Israel -- not *all* Israel, but a few, who have the hope of Messiah's coming, and pray for the kingdom to be set up of which prophets prophesied. These will be God's witnesses in the earth, who will go out among the Gentiles,

and declare the gospel of the kingdom {Matt. 4:23, 9:35; Mark 1:14} among all nations. This will be their testimony {Rev. 6:9}, and their authority, that which the Holy Spirit always gives the word of God {Rev. 6:9}.

They will witness to Messiah's coming to deliver His people Israel, and to reign as King over all the earth. We now wait for God's Son from heaven, to be caught up to meet Him in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord; but *they* who are on the earth after this rapture will wait for Messiah coming in glory as Deliverer of Israel, to sit on the throne of David, reign before His ancients gloriously, and, like the true Solomon, bring in by judgment and power the promised day of the Lord, when *all the earth* shall be filled with His glory. This is the hope proper to a godly Jew. The difference in the two expectations is obvious. *The former* agrees with a heavenly standing, citizenship, and union with Christ ascended, as members of His body; *the latter* is consistent with those whose promise is blessing in the earth, and is suited to such when they are groaning under persecution, and sighing for present deliverance *on earth*, according to God's promises to Abraham and his seed. The two expectations will be clear to those who carefully read and compare the last chapter of Malachi with the last chapter of Revelation.

Those in the fifth seal, then, clearly do not belong to the Church. The altar reminds us of the temple. Their cry is not for mercy on their enemies, but for vengeance. This, too, shows us that they are on Jewish ground. The Church of God is taught to love her enemies, and, like Jesus, to cry,

Father forgive them {Luke 23:34};

or, like Stephen on behalf of his murderers,

Lord, lay not this sin to their charge {Acts 7:60}.

Whereas these disembodied souls under the altar cry with a loud voice,

How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge *our blood* on them that dwell on the earth? {Rev. 6:10}.

Many judgments had been poured out from the hand of God on opening the previous seals, but *their blood* had not been avenged; and it may be that their cry brings out the fearful signs and wonders, terror, distress, earthquakes, and lightnings, of the two next seals, and the terrible wrath that will be inflicted by the personal revelation of Christ Himself. Their cry, then, may hasten His revelation from heaven, in flaming fire to take vengeance, etc. His Church will accompany Him; for

when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear *with Him* in glory {see Col. 3:4}.

These "souls" had been God's witnesses *in the earth*. In the face of frowning infidelity and ignorance, they contended that *the earth* belonged to God, and that the feet of Messiah would soon stand on the Mount of Olives, and *all the earth* be in subjection to Him. Like the experience of those in the book of Psalms, they expect God to judge and avenge *in the earth*, whereas we simply wait for God's Son from heaven to take us to Himself.

These martyred ones know full well that vengeance will come, that God will make inquisition for blood, and judge

righteously *in the earth*; but it seems long to wait, and they cry, "How long?"

God answers their cry at once, by giving to each of them a white robe, in token of their standing in acceptance before Him, and by telling them that they must rest *for a little season*, until their fellow servants also and their brethren should be killed as they were. This we find described in Rev. 13:7. It is well to see that the Lord calls them

brethren {Rev. 6:11};

and those who are spoken of as suffering, in Matt. 25:40, are also called "brethren," which seems to refer to the same class and period.

These "souls," having lost by faithful testimony their looked-for inheritance on earth, have it more than made up by living and reigning with Christ in the first resurrection. This is brought out in Rev. 20:4, where they are spoken of as

beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God.

The Sixth Seal

God's promise, that He will yet shake, not the earth only, but also heaven, leads us to expect a great convulsion, both in the heavenly and earthly divisions of the created universe. We know, also, from Scripture, that the time will come when

the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, *the earth* also and the works that are therein shall be burned up {2 Pet. 3:10}.

The present earth and heaven shall flee away before the face of Him who will sit on the great white throne, and no place shall be found for them. This will be followed with

new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (see 2 Pet. 3:10, 13; Rev. 20:11).

Again, Paul, in writing to the Hebrews on the Godhead of the Son, quotes from the 102nd Psalm to show that He endures after this present creation-scene shall have passed away.

Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture, shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail {Heb. 1:10-12}.

We are thus taught to expect the passing away of the present heaven and earth, which we know will take place at the *close* of the millennium; but, prior to that, we look for terrible convulsions and changes; for God hath declared by His prophet Joel,

I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, *before* the great and the terrible day of the Lord come {Joel 2:30, 31}.

Our Lord Himself, also, when asked what would be the sign of His coming to Israel, when they shall say,

Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord (Matt. 23:39, and 24:3),

replied,

The *sun* shall be darkened, and the *moon* shall not give her light, and the *stars* shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear *the sign* of the Son of man in heaven {Matt. 24:29, 30}.

Our Lord also said;

There shall be signs in the *sun*, and in the *moon*, and in the *stars*; and upon the earth distress of nations; with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for *looking after those things which are coming* upon the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be *shaken* (Luke 21:25, 26).

Thus we see that terrible shaking, both of the heaven and earth, will not only take place *before* our Lord is revealed, but that it will be of such duration that men will have time to fear, and to look for what further is coming.

We are not surprised, then, to find in the Apocalypse, when the Lamb opened the sixth seal, that

Lo! there was a great earthquake; and the *sun* became black as sackcloth of hair, and the *moon* became as blood; and the *stars* of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the *heaven* departed as a scroll when it is rolled together [or, the heaven was removed as a book rolled up]; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places, etc. {Rev. 6:12-14}.

It seems to me that these changes, whether physical or political, take place not long before the Lord is visibly revealed from heaven. We must remember that at this period infidelity is thriving in the earth, man is deified, and the only Lord God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, is denied. In this way, we can understand how God will rebuke and confound the wisdom of the wise by such terrible commotions.

Men will be greatly alarmed and distressed at the actions of the sixth seal; but it is not the actual coming of the Lord, though they say so; for the seventh seal has yet to be loosed. At this time we find,

The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for [mark, *they say*,] the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? {Rev. 6:15-17}.

The fear and distress of men are plainly marked in this scene; but *after this*, though it may be a very short time after, when the Lord is actually revealed, men are in a different mind; alarm and fear seem to have passed off, and infidelity to have usurped its place in their hearts; for they are in full league with the Man of Sin against Christ. With reference to that awful time, it is said,

I saw the beast, and *the kings of the earth and their armies*, gathered together to *make war* against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army {Rev. 19:19}.

Then men will be bold indeed in their antagonism to the Lamb, instead of being overwhelmed with anguish and terror, as at the time of the sixth seal.

Whatever physical changes may take place at the opening of the sixth seal, it is clear that the falling of the stars from heaven unto the earth, and the heaven departing as a scroll rolled together, before the appearing of our Lord, have a symbolic meaning. There may be reference to the fall of bright and distinguished personages, the breaking up of ecclesiastical powers and governments, and the shaking of everything that man tries to rest and glory in; but whatever it be, it clearly fills the minds of those dwelling on the earth with extreme terror and distress, and causes great alarm at the thought of the Lamb coming in wrath.

The Seventh Seal

We pass on now to the beginning of the eighth chapter, to notice the last of the seals, because we regard the seventh chapter as a parenthesis; that is, not containing events which, in their occurrences, come in between the sixth and seventh seals, but which may take place during other parts of the apocalyptic period.

The seventh seal discloses to us the unfolding of the last roll of the prophetic book that was in the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne, and, I suggest, has its accomplishment, together with the last trumpet and last vial, in ushering in the personal revelation of the Lord from heaven, when the prophetic word will be fulfilled:

The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee (Zech. 14:5).

We do not expect lightnings and thunderings after Christ is manifested, but we find, in Rev. 19 where an account of Christ's glorious appearing is given, it is said,

I heard as it were the *voice* of a great multitude, and as the *voice* of many waters, and as the *voice of mighty thunderings*, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth {Rev. 19:6}.

We are told that when he had opened the seventh seal,

there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour {Rev. 8:1}.

There have been many conjectures about what this "silence in heaven" can mean; but there has been no better thought suggested, perhaps, than that of all intelligences in heaven standing in solemn awe at the fact, that the Lord Himself was now about to go forth in flaming fiery vengeance, to judge the world in righteousness, and to put all enemies under His feet. We can understand "silence in heaven," I think, under such unparalleled circumstances.

John also saw

seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets; and another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake {Rev. 8:2-5}.

"The altar," and "fire of the altar," clearly show it to be the altar of burnt offering; whilst an angel-priest standing at the golden

altar, using the censer, and burning the incense, gives acceptance to “the prayers of the saints.” These points invite our attention to a scene in connection with those who are on Jewish ground. It is remarkable, too, that the one who is seen acting as High Priest is not presented as a partaker of flesh and bones, but as an angel. No doubt it is Jesus the Lord, whom Israel will know, for He is a Priest for ever,

after the order of Melchizedec {Psa. 110:4}.

The Church of God now knows Jesus as her great High Priest, compassionate, merciful, faithful, and sympathizing, who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin; who intercedes for us and loves us as His own flesh and bone. This priestly intercession of Jesus will not be needed by us, as it is now, when we are glorified with Him, though we shall always know Him as a blessing priest; but those in Israel who do turn to Jehovah, and look for their Messiah, will need a priestly intercessor to present their groans and cries to God. Jesus will be both King and Priest to Israel. A praying people on earth, after the taking up of the heavenly saints, has been noticed in Rev. 5:8, and also in Rev. 6:10, where we see the character of their prayers as that of calling on God for vengeance. In this 8th chapter, God is known, we judge, as regarding the sighing of these poor and needy ones, and as having provided a faithful High-Priest in Jesus for them. He presents their prayers with incense from the golden censer, and in answer, it appears, the censer is filled with the fire of the altar -- that consuming fire -- and *cast into the earth*; and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake are the result, -- accompanied or followed, if I mistake not, by the personal return of Christ in fiery vengeance: for He will avenge His own elect speedily. It seems as if the cry of an oppressed remnant will be the means of bringing Christ Himself to judge the world in righteousness, and of bringing His beloved nation into its long-promised rest and blessing.

Though the seven angels are seen here with trumpets, it does not follow that their several actions do not begin before the seventh seal is opened. John says he saw them, and he also saw them in Rev. 7:1-3, and heard commands given to them. For reasons previously given, the seals, trumpets, and vials, seem to be synchronous in their termination.⁹ Neither should I suppose that the priesthood of the Lord for His afflicted and oppressed ones only actually began when the seventh seal was opened. John seems to have seen it when the seventh scroll was unfolded; and in relating the different visions we find in this book, while some events are recorded in chronological order, others are not: for instance, at the end of the fifth chapter we are taken into the millennium, and in the following chapter brought back again; at the end of the eleventh chapter we are taken to the close of the millennium, and the twelfth begins with the incarnation of Christ.

The fourteenth chapter also takes us to an event after the Lord's personal return, when He will tread the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God; and afterwards we are brought back again. There are other instances of a similar character. As we go through the Revelation, a series of pictures or visions pass before the eye, each perfect in itself, but the several pictures do not follow each other in distinct sequence as to order of fulfilment.

It may be said that the parallel of the seventh seal is not found in the twenty-fourth of Matthew, which we have considered as giving us a prophetic sketch of the seventieth week of Daniel, or the apocalyptic period, which we understand the seven seals to include. True, it is not so plainly referred to as the other six seals are; but as we have the sixth seal distinctly brought out in the 29th verse of that chapter, and the mourning of the tribes predicted by Zechariah (chap. 12:10), and the gathering of the elect of Israel, which we know will be after the Lord's personal revelation in the clouds of heaven, in the following verses, the seventh seal, trumpet, and vial, will be prior to this. We conceive therefore, that it will come so speedily after the commotions of the sixth seal, that we must leave room for the seventh seal, and we are inclined to connect it with the first line of the 30th verse:

Then shall appear *the sign* of the Son of man in heaven
{Matt. 24:30}.

9. {It is helpful to see that the opening of the seventh seal opens the roll completely -- bringing the action to the middle of the 70th week -- the time when Satan is cast down from heaven, and also the Whore is overthrown, when Antichrist, the Man of Sin (the second beast in Rev. 13) is revealed. Then the trumpet judgments begin.

Rev. 15:1 shows that the seals, trumpets, and bowls cannot be synchronous in their termination. Rather, it appears that the seals occupy the first half-week, the trumpets the second half-week, and the bowls occupy a short space between the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the appearing of the Lord in glory in connection with the pouring out of the seventh bowl.}

Chapter 7: The Parenthesis Between the Sixth And Seventh Seals

This chapter is a remarkable break in this inspired book. Judgment after judgment on men living on the earth has passed before us; and while the heart has been saddened at the tales of woe which the opening of the various seals has brought out, this chapter seems introduced to remind us that

mercy rejoices against judgment {see James 2:13}.

As on former occasions, so now, God's electing love comes in to spare, when all would otherwise terminate in misery and woe.

The terror and distress of men, crying to mountains and rocks to fall on them, had just passed before the eye of the apostle; and the seventh seal, with its thunderings and lightnings, is stayed for a little, while John sees that there is mercy for some on the earth, amidst all the terrible outpourings of divine judgments. The seventh chapter, then, must be regarded as a parenthesis, not having its fulfilment between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, but presented to the apostle after the sixth seal,

[After these things I saw {Rev. 7:1},]

to show that God yet remembers mercy to many on the earth. Two gracious scenes are here opened up to us; one in relation to Israel, the other comprehending Gentiles --

persons of *all* nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues {see Rev. 7:9}.

Now we have three classes in the world spoken of in Scripture -- Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God. After the Church is caught up to meet the Lord in the air, we shall have again only Jews and Gentiles on earth. As we have repeatedly noticed, God begins again to deal with his ancient people Israel, and Jesus acts as their Melchizedec High-Priest; this makes it probable that this election and sealing of the twelve tribes may take place early in the apocalyptic period. The latter vision of this chapter must have its fulfilment during the persecuting power of "the man of sin," when every one is threatened with death who will not fall down and worship the beast.

It would seem as if four of the seven angels which have the seven trumpets have a mission in relation to the earth, the sea, and trees. They are presented as standing on the four corners of the *earth*, holding the four winds of the *earth*, that the wind should not blow on the *earth*, nor on the *sea*, nor on any *tree*. Another angel, having the seal of the living God, ascends from the east or sun-rising (the source of blessing), and cries with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying,

Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, *till* we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads {Rev. 7:3}.

The judgment of these angels must be suspended until the sealing has taken place. These sealed ones are the

special objects of God's care; for when the fifth angel sounds, the locusts which come out of the bottomless pit are commanded that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which *have not the seal of God in their foreheads* (Rev. 9:4).

Some have thought, that the angel with the seal is Christ, but we should judge it not to be so; first, because he says,

Till we have sealed the servants of *our* God in their foreheads {Rev. 7:3};

and, secondly, because angelic agency is almost always exercised in acts of mercy, as well as judgment, towards those who stand in relation to the earth, or to the kingdom at the end of the age. The Church waits for Christ Himself. His promise is,

I will come again, and receive you *unto myself* {John 14:3};

but angels will gather the scattered tribes from the four winds (Matt. 24:31), and angels will bind the tares in bundles, and gather the wheat into the barn, as also sever the wicked from among the just. I need, perhaps, scarcely say, that the catching up of the saints is not a severing of the wicked from among the just, but a separation of the saints from among the wicked, and will have taken place before the end of this present age (Matt. 13:49).

The number of Israelites sealed is an hundred and forty and four thousand; twelve thousand out of each of the twelve tribes. They are marked and set apart for blessing in the earth, according to the election of grace, before the judgments are enacted. The fleshly order, therefore, is not observed; hence Judah, and not Reuben, heads the list; for blessing on the ground of mercy can only be by Him who is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root and Offspring of David. Instead of Dan, we have Manasses. There have been many conjectures why Dan is omitted. Some have thought it is because the tribe of Dan has been so mixed up with idolatry; others, because they suppose that "the man of sin" will be a Danite; but as the hundred and forty and four thousand is an election from Israel, these reasons cannot be entertained for a moment; and we believe that the difficulty is only solved by

even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight {Matt. 11:26; Luke 10:21}.

Where the ten tribes are now, no man knows; but God's eye is upon them, and however they may be scattered, He is able to bring them forth again in His own time (Matt. 24:31). It is remarkable, that when the land is again divided, Dan's lot is mentioned first (Ezek. 48:1). We may notice also that the tribes are sealed with the seal of the *living* God, which intimates their security and preservation in time of judgment and death. Their standing before God is that of "servants," not "sons," or members of the body of Christ, as we are. Our blessings are in the heavenlies *in* Christ; Israel's portion is blessing in the earth.

Not only must preparatory judgments have been poured out, but the time of the great tribulation must have set in, before the second action of this chapter, the salvation of the innumerable multitude, can have its accomplishment. The Church having been completed and removed, God again deals with Jews and Gentiles as such; therefore we have in the former part of the chapter a certain number of Jews sealed, and in the latter part a separate company of Gentiles saved as such, who came out of the great tribulation, and are brought by the blood of the Lamb to stand before the throne of God. It is not the idea of "one body," a limited number of members, as is indicated by the "one new man," but an innumerable multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues. Their position of victory, with palms in their hands, shows that they had been in previous conflict, and had overcome; and though they do not prostrate themselves in adoration and worship, as the elders in the fourth chapter, they do cry with a loud voice,

Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb {Rev. 7:10}.

This shows that they are redeemed to God.

In the fourth and fifth chapters, we have the throne of God, the Lamb, the elders, and living creatures, and all the angels standing round about the throne; but here we have in addition this great multitude, which no man could number {Rev. 7:9}.

They have

white robes {Rev. 7:9},

as we saw that those also had who suffered unto death for the truth's sake under the fifth seal, which shows that God: accounts them righteous and spotless in His sight. But observe that this "great multitude" have no crowns, are not seated on thrones, neither have they harps, as the elders in the fourth and fifth chapters. Moreover, they are described as serving God

day and night *in His temple* {Rev. 7:15}

whereas when the Church is seen in Rev. 21: it is said,

I saw no temple therein {Rev. 21:22}.

We notice also that all this "great multitude" came out of the great tribulation; this specially characterizes them. Eighteen hundred years have passed away since the Holy Ghost came down on the day of Pentecost, to baptize believers into "one body," an immense number of whom have fallen asleep in Jesus; and the "great tribulation" has not yet commenced, so that this also distinguishes them as a people, though saved, not identified with the Church. This "great multitude" have also been exposed to peculiar bodily sufferings and hardships, as those will be who live during the unparalleled persecution and oppression of "the man of sin." It is 'therefore said of them that they

shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat, etc. {Rev. 7:16};

and that

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes {Rev. 7:17}.

Some may say, Does not this chapter present the Church to us, only in another aspect to what we saw in the fourth and fifth chapters? We reply, that if those who had previously included the Church were omitted here, there might be some reason for the supposition; but the "great multitude" comes in here as an *additional* company. Besides, one of the elders, who, as we have

before noticed, are always characterized in this book by their spiritual intelligence, raises the question, and then gives us the answer,

what are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? {Rev. 7:13}.

Do not these questions at once distinguish them? The elder does not say, who are we? but, What are these? and whence came they? Can anything be plainer? The answer is,

These are they which came out of (the) great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, &c. {Rev. 7:14}.

The great tribulation is called by Jeremiah,

Jacob's trouble,

for they crucified the true Messiah, and will receive the false one.

I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive (John 5:43).

The prophet says,

Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7).

Mark, it is not called the time of the Church's trouble, but of Jacob's trouble. The Church is promised to be kept from it (Rev. 3:10). Daniel says,

There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time. . . . The wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the *wise shall understand* (Dan. 12:1, 10).

Our Lord also said,

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet [see Dan. 9:27] stand in the holy place (*whoso readeth let him understand:*) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: . . . for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake [Israel is called the elect in Isa. 45:9, 22,] those days shall be shortened (Matt. 24:15, 22).

That is, so terrible will be the hand of oppression, in causing all to be put to death who will not worship the beast, that unless God were to shorten the days, all the faithful on the earth would be exterminated. Out of this "great tribulation" this "great multitude" came.

How beautifully parenthetic, then, this seventh chapter of the Revelation comes in, to relieve the heart in the contemplation of such terrible scenes as this book presents to us, both before and after it. How it tells us of divine mercy rejoicing against judgment, and shows us that those faithful ones, who refuse to bow down to the beast or his image, and will not receive his mark in their foreheads and right hands, will overcome him by the blood of the Lamb, and find a place of never-ending blessing in God's own presence.

Chapter 8:6 to Chapter 11: The Seven Trumpets

At whatever period the seven trumpets begin to sound, the series is continued until the Lord takes His great power, and reigns. The first four trumpet-actions do not seem to bear directly on men, though the third trumpet-sound causes the waters to become bitter, and *many men* drink of the waters, and die. The last three trumpets are connected with terrible power and judgment directly upon men living on the earth, and are called the three woes. It is God punishing the inhabitants of the earth. The trumpets are severer in their character than the seals.

We noticed, in considering the seventh chapter, that the angels were not to sound their trumpets until the elect remnant of Israel was set apart -- till the servants of our God are sealed in their foreheads. That being done, the first angel sounds a trumpet.

The First Trumpet

The FIRST ANGEL sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up (Rev. 8:7).

We must never forget, in reading the Revelation, that after the Church has been caught up, the energy of Satan in the earth will be increasingly put forth, so as at last to deluge the world with infidelity; and God will send men strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. Like as in the days of Pharaoh, men will say,

Who is the Lord, that we should obey Him? {see Ex. 5:2}

and the only Lord God, and only wise God, will be denied, and man exalted. Therefore, under such circumstances, we may expect that God would remarkably manifest Himself as the *living God*, by various actions in different parts of the universe, as He has hitherto done in the days of special darkness and unbelief. The hail, fire, turning water into blood, and other plagues of Egypt, bear testimony to this; and closing the heavens, that there might be no rain for three years and a half, and then again sending rain in Ahab's day, show us the same thing. Nor should we forget the darkness at the crucifixion of our Lord, and the signs that followed, in the rending of the rocks, the earthquake, the rending of the veil, the opening of the graves, and rising of the bodies of the saints, and appearing to many, as God's own witnesses to men that He is the living God.

The third part of trees and green grass may be emblematic of prosperity. Thus, men are touched in their prosperous circumstances.

The Second Trumpet

The SECOND ANGEL sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed (Rev. 8:8, 9).

In the first trumpet, we see hail, fire, and blood, cast upon *the earth*, and some trees and all green grass burnt up. In the second trumpet, a great mountain, *as it were* (that is, something similar to a great burning mountain), is cast *into the sea*, when the third part of the sea becomes blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea die, and a third of the ships are destroyed. In the first trumpet, the earth, trees, grass are affected; and in the second, the sea, its creatures, and its ships: both are fiery, burning judgments.

The great burning mountain may be a symbol of power removed from its accustomed place, and thrown into that which brings terrible judgment upon the people.

The Third Trumpet

The THIRD ANGEL sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter (Rev. 8:10, 11).

This judgment is upon rivers, and fountains of water, turning them bitter, and producing death on many men who drink thereof. One would think that such mighty exhibitions of Divine power would soften men's hearts. But it is not so. Man's mind will, perhaps, then try to account for such changes, even as it does now for many of God's actings. Love, God's own love to man as a sinner, in the Cross of Christ, alone breaks and captivates the human heart. Mercy, sweet mercy, is the sound that the Holy Spirit uses to enter and take full possession of man's affections and desires. Some one has said truly, that

"Law and terrors do but harden
All the while they work alone
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

The star falling from heaven may be the symbol of a mighty ruler having fallen from his place of authority; burning as a lamp may show how brightly he had shone. "Waters" may be emblematic of people, and "fountains" and "rivers" their sources of refreshment.

The Fourth Trumpet

The FOURTH ANGEL sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise (Rev. 8:12).

Thus we see the soundings of the first four angels connected with signs and changes in almost every department of the universe. There are not only

signs in the earth beneath,

but also

wonders in heaven above {Acts 2:19}:

The earth, trees, grass, sea, fish, rivers, fountains, men, sun, moon, stars, day and night, each in turn exhibit marks of God's interference. All these judgments have doubtless symbolic signification. Under the action of the fourth trumpet, the highest authorities are smitten -- sun, moon, and stars. But all these things, together with the casting of hail and fire on the earth mingled with blood, are far less severe than the judgments that follow the sounding of the other three angels. These are specially marked by being prefaced with an announcement of an angel, saying,

WOE, WOE, WOE to the inhabitants of the earth.

And I beheld, and heard (not an angel but) an eagle flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound! (Rev. 8:13).

This distinctly marks the last three trumpets as directly upon the inhabitants of the earth.

God now deals directly with men, and that at first by the power of Satan, and then by the personal coming of Christ Himself.

The Fifth Trumpet

When the FIFTH ANGEL sounds, a mighty potentate is seen, likened to a star, once having had a place among the heavenly luminaries, but fallen from it:

a star (not 'fall' but) fallen from heaven {Rev. 9:1},

to whom the key of the bottomless pit is given; i.e. the abyss where Satan will be imprisoned, not the lake of fire. He opened the abyss; a dense smoke and darkness arose from the pit, and out of the smoke came locusts upon earth, with the power of scorpions. This mission is one of judicial bearing on men, and, perhaps, especially, on the Jews; for they are commanded not to hurt the grass, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. They are not to kill, but to torment them five months. Infliction, and misery without death, characterize this judgment. That these locusts are figurative of Satanic power seems reasonable, from their issuing out of the bottomless pit, their being likened to horses prepared to battle, wearing crowns on their heads, having faces of men, hair of women, and teeth of lions, breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings like the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. They have tails also like scorpions, and have a king over them -- the angel of the bottomless pit. All these things mark them as mighty instruments for inflicting torture on men, and

sufficiently prove that they are not mere locusts, but devils let loose to grievously torment man. We are told,

In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them {Rev. 9:6}.

What language can more touchingly convey the exquisite suffering of men in those days. It may be much nearer, too, than any of us think! Happy they who are now safely sheltered by the redeeming blood of the Lord Jesus Christ!

This may be truly called a woe; but terrible woes are yet to come. Accordingly, we are told,

One woe is past, and behold there come two woes more after these things {Rev. 9:12}.

The Sixth Trumpet

The SIXTH ANGEL sounded, and I heard a voice from the

four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates {Rev. 9:13, 14}.

This is done, and they are prepared for a limited time, not to torment, but to slay the third part of men. Two hundred millions of wicked agents are employed in slaying men --

two hundred thousand thousand {Rev. 9:16}.

It seems Satanic agency, because of the fire, smoke, and brimstone which issued from their mouths; and the region may be in the east.

By these three, that is, by the

fire, smoke, and brimstone,

was the third part of men killed {see Rev. 9:18}.

But, as we have seen before, all these judgments do not lead men to repentance. One might have thought that these solemn interventions of God might have caused those who were spared to turn to God. But we are told,

And the rest of the men which were not killed by those plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts (Rev. 9:20, 21).

How sunken and incurable is the heart of man! How every part of his history -- past, present, and future, illustrates the Divine verdict, that

the carnal mind is enmity against God, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be {Rom. 8:7}.

Seeing that such terrible things are coming upon the earth, and we know not how soon, how prayerful and earnest should we be in seeking to win souls for Christ. May our gracious God most mercifully work, by the power of His Holy Spirit, through the gospel of His grace, to the salvation of multitudes of sinners now so zealously posting their way toward

the wrath to come {1 Thess. 1:10}.

The Seventh Trumpet

sounds, and our souls are at once drawn from earth and its miseries to heaven and its joys. Heaven rejoices that the earth is rescued from the hands of man and Satan, and that the Lord Jesus, the rightful heir, takes possession of it (Rev. 11:15-19).

The seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever {Rev. 11:15}.

As usual, the elders who delight in the exaltation of the Lord, are in intelligent communion with God about the things of Christ; therefore we find that

the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their thrones, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast; because thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned {Rev. 11:16, 17}.

Observe that the living creatures are not noticed here in company with the elders.

The consequences and attendants upon Christ's taking the judgment and government of the earth into His own hands follow the sounding of this trumpet.

Thy wrath is come {Rev. 11:18};

for He will come, in flaming fire taking vengeance, and must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.

The nations were angry {Rev. 11:18},

or, have been full of wrath; but now it is the time of the wrath of the Lamb.

Every eye shall see Him . . . and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him {Rev. 1:7}.

We also see that God's servants the prophets, and the saints, are rewarded, and those that fear Him, both small and great; those that destroyed or corrupted the earth are destroyed; and the dead are judged. It is a brief sketch of the various acts of judgment during the reign of Christ, from the beginning of His taking the kingdom to the end.

The chapter closes with the account of the temple of God being opened in heaven, the ark of the testament seen, with the lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail. Happy for our hearts to find, that while judgment is poured out upon earth, the ark of the covenant is seen in heaven, witnessing to God's faithfulness, and the everlasting stability of His people's hope. The ark tells us of the mercy seat and the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel. This is rest. The precious blood, presented for us before God, always reminds us of entrance into the holiest and perfect peace, whatever may be the trouble and distress around. While looking thus by faith at our Lord Jesus at the right hand of God, presenting His own perfect sacrifice there on our behalf, we can not only cry, Come, Lord Jesus! but we realize that

"Faith almost changes into sight,
While, from afar, she spies
Her fair inheritance in light
Above created skies.

"Some rays of heaven break sweetly in
At all the opening flaws;
Visions of endless bliss are seen,
And native air she draws."

Chapter 10, 11:1-14: *The Parenthesis Between the Sixth And Seventh Trumpets*

As we found a parenthetic announcement between the opening of the sixth and seventh seals, so there is also a parenthesis between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets. Sore and terrible judgments had been poured upon men, as we have seen, and before the climax, when Christ shall take unto Him His great power and reign, the visions and attendant acts, delineated in the tenth and part of the eleventh chapters, are brought before God's servant.

The tenth chapter evidently intimates that Christ is soon about to assert His own rights in the earth, and to declare that He is the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords. The mighty angel clothed with a cloud, with a rainbow about his head, his *countenance like the sun*, and his *feet as pillars of fire*, seems symbolical of our Lord; for He is presented to us in a somewhat similar appearance in the first chapter. It was a vision John had of a mighty angel thus symbolizing Christ, because the period for the actual return of Christ had not yet come. It is, doubtless, to inform us, that however hardened, unbelieving, and impenitent men may be, yet that Christ is Lord of all, and is shortly about to lay claim to all, and, therefore, that matters will be rapidly hastened.

We must refer to the book of Daniel to get anything like a clear elucidation of this tenth chapter. In the vision recorded by the prophet in the twelfth of Daniel, he says,

And one said to THE MAN clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard THE MAN clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and a half; and when He shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things SHALL BE FINISHED (Dan. 12:6, 7).

The man clothed in linen refers us back to the vision in the tenth chapter, fifth and sixth verses, by the side of the river Hiddekel, which corresponds with the vision John had of

one like unto the Son of man,

in the first chapter of Revelation. So that no doubt can be left on the mind that

the man clothed in linen,

which Daniel saw, is Christ. In the tenth chapter of Revelation, John says,

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer [or rather, that there should be no longer delay]: but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God SHOULD BE FINISHED, as He hath declared to His servants the prophets {Rev. 10:1-7}.

Thus we see that the similarity between Daniel's vision and John's is most striking; and by comparing them, as God by His Spirit may enable us, we shall be greatly helped in the understanding of both.

Daniel, however, is commanded to

shut up the words, and seal the book to the time of the end (Dan. 12:4);

whereas, John sees the

little book open {Rev. 10:2},

because, I suppose, the time of the end, that is, the end of the age, or seventieth week, or the last half of it, has now come. The question in Daniel is,

How long shall it be to *the end* of these wonders? {Rev. 12:6}

The answer is, that it shall be

for a time, times, and a half {Rev. 12:7},

or three years and a half. In Revelation, instead of its being translated that there should be time no longer, it should be that there should be no longer delay. The thought that the time state is over, and eternity come, would be most incorrect; for the millennial age has not only yet to come, but John is told that he must prophesy again to peoples and nations. It is then an intimation between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, that there shall be no longer delay, and that restraint shall be withheld to the full consummation of the abominations of the wicked one; that the mystery of iniquity shall be quickly and fully developed. Daniel speaks of *all being finished* at the end of a time, times, and a half; and John also says, that when the seventh angel

shall begin to sound, the mystery of God *should be finished*. Both in Daniel and in Revelation the person lifts up his hand to heaven, and swears by Him that liveth for ever; only in Revelation it is added,

who *created* heaven, and the things which therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein {Rev. 10:6};

because, as we have repeatedly noticed in the apocalyptic period, God is denied by man, not only as Redeemer, but also as Creator.

The mystery of God {Rev. 10:7}

referred to here cannot be "the mystery" of the Church, the body of Christ, spoken of by Paul: 1st. Because the mystery of the Church was not revealed in other ages unto *prophets*, but was kept secret since the world began (Eph. 3:5; Rom. 16:25); whereas, concerning

the mystery of God,

it is here said that it should be *finished*, as He hath declared to the *prophets*. 2nd. We know that the Church is in heaven, before the book is taken, the seals opened, or trumpets sounded.

Besides "the mystery" of the one body, the Church, there are other things in Scripture associated with the word "mystery." We have

the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16);

the

mystery (1 Cor. 15:51)

of the resurrection and change of the saints; the

mystery (Rom. 11:24, 25),

of Israel;

the mystery (Eph. 1:9, 10),

of all things in heaven and in earth being gathered together in one, in Christ; the

mystery (Rev. 17:5),

of the mother of harlots;

the mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7), etc.

Here it is

the mystery of God,

the mystery, as I judge, that God should allow man to go on in such a course of unparalleled evil, and under such Satanic energy. Some have thought that "the mystery of God" is God grafting Israel again into their own olive tree, which prophets have so repeatedly foretold -- the time when

Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit (Isa. 27:6);

but this is not called in scripture "the mystery of God." However, it is clear that the sounding of the seventh angel will be the time when not only judgment will fall upon the ungodly, but when Christ will deliver, and turn away ungodliness from Jacob; and bring His ancient people into their long looked-for blessing and promised inheritance.

Some have thought, that because "the mystery of God," being "finished," is accompanied with the last or seventh of the apocalyptic trumpets, it must necessarily be the time of the

changing and the taking up of the saints, and identical with 1 Cor. 15, where we get the

mystery {1 Cor. 15:51}

of the living saints changed, the dead raised, and

the last trump (1 Cor. 15:52).

Appearances are certainly much in favour of such a thought; but for reasons before assigned, it cannot be the Church which is referred to in Rev. 10:7. Nor are

the last trump,

and the

voice of the seventh angel (of Rev. 10:7),

identical; for the former is connected with the saints being raised and changed, the latter with the Lord's return from heaven *with* His saints. Neither are we to understand, that by "the last trump" is meant the last that will ever be sounded, any more than "the last day," or the day when we shall be raised up (John 6), is the last period of time. In both cases we are clearly to understand, that they are the last to us in relation to this present time. That "the day of the Lord," so often spoken of in Scripture, will have its course for a thousand years after *we* have been raised up "at the last day," that is, after we have our "last day," is certain, and also there can be no doubt but that after the raising of the saints "at the last trump," another

great trumpet will be blown (Isa. 27:13; Matt. 24:31)

to gather Israel -- those who are now scattered to the four winds. It is evident, also, that this trumpet of Isaiah and Matthew is *after* the seven apocalyptic trumpets have sounded, because the last of their actions ushers in the personal return of Christ. Some one has said, that "the last trump" of 1 Cor. 15 is properly termed the last, because it announces the close or termination of the course of the Church's pilgrimage on earth. In 1 Thess. 4 it is called

the trump of God {1 Thess. 4:16},

but it is blown with an entirely different action and history from that of Isa. 27, or the apocalyptic. We might put the trumpet of Isa. 27 in company with that of Matt. 24:31, and it is blown in a scene of action which succeeds that of Rev. 8, 9, 11:15, where we have the trumpets of the Apocalypse. Among the several actions of the trumpets in Num. 10, we find that the last in order was for the gathering of the congregation together.

The chapter concludes with the account of John's being commanded to

go and take the little book which is open in the angel's hand {Rev. 10:8},

which he did, and was then ordered to

eat it up {Rev. 10:9}.

This also he did and according to the saying of the angel, he found that it was in his mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as he had eaten it, his belly was bitter. Then it is said to him,

Thou must prophesy again before many peoples and nations, and tongues, and kings {Rev. 10:11}.

As I have before remarked, this last command shows that the end of the age is not yet come. But as the apostle had here a very similar experience to the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 3:3), we may gather this important practical instruction, that if we would be

God's faithful witnesses on the earth, we must know what it is to eat God's word -- the open book. Jeremiah said,

Thy words were found, and I did *eat* them, and thy word was unto me the joy and the rejoicing of my heart {Jer. 15:16}.

We must know, too, the inward experience of the truth. It is very sweet to gather up portions of God's word. The Scripture often becomes an object of intense present interest, as well as of comfort, but it has its bitter workings. It makes painful discoveries of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, reveals the secret springs of motive and desire, and uncovers the mask of worldliness;

for the word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart {Heb. 4:12}.

In the parenthesis between the openings of the sixth and seventh seals, we had the tribes of the children of Israel brought before us, as well as nations, kindreds, and tongues; so in the parenthetic announcement between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets, John is not only commanded to prophesy again before many nations and tongues, but Israel, too, is again introduced. Daniel's people, with the holy city and temple of God, are presented at the opening of the 11th chapter. Gentiles are treading under foot the holy city. When this scene is fulfilled, Jews and Gentiles will be recognised as such. Not so now; for in the Church of God there is neither Jew nor Greek, but all believers are one in Christ; but when the body is complete, and we have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, then, as we have before seen, the seventieth week of prophecy relating to Daniel's people and city will have its accomplishment; therefore Jews and Gentiles will be again recognised as such. It will be the transition time between the coming of the Lord *for* His saints, and His coming *with* His saints. Our chapter, therefore, begins with the following announcement:

And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles, and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months (Rev. 11:1, 2).

We must distinguish, however, between

THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES {Luke 21:24},

and

THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES {Rom. 11:25};

for they are very distinct in Scripture. It is clearly the former which is referred to here. Our Lord said that

Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until *the times of the Gentiles* be fulfilled (Luke 21:24).

We may say that the times of the Gentiles began with Nebuchadnezzar, from which time, more or less, Israel and the holy city have been trodden down by them, and Gentilism has had the ascendancy. It ran through its four successive monarchies, and since then has been hastening on to its completion in the ten kingdoms, and final destruction (Dan. 2:31-45). The times of the Gentiles are thus running on, and Jerusalem is trodden down. After the Church is removed, the Gentiles will still tread it down, as we here see; and even when the Lord comes in glory with His

saints, He will find Jerusalem compassed with armies and then the end of "the times of the Gentiles" will have come. The Lord Himself shall fight against those nations (Zech. 14:1, 2). He is the stone cut out without hands that shall fall upon the Gentile image, break it in pieces, and scatter it as the chaff of the summer threshing-floors.

THE FULNESS OF THE GENTILES

is a very different thing. Israel, as a people, are now set aside, though a remnant is saved by the gospel, according to the election of grace. God is filling up the intended number of Gentiles to be saved (the word fulness might be rendered "complement"), and thus calling out of the Gentiles a people for His name (Acts 15:14). When God shall have fully gathered out of every nation, kindred, people, and tongue, the allotted number unto Himself, then shall the fulness of the Gentiles be come in -- come in to God; and Israel, *now* as a nation altogether under judicial blindness, except those to whom Christ is revealed, will *then* be the object of God's peculiar care and blessing. Paul calls this a mystery, and he would not have saints be ignorant of it. He says

that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until *the fulness of the Gentiles* be come in. And so [that is, in this order] all *Israel* shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins (Rom. 11:25-27).

The Deliverer, Christ, must come to effect this. Thus we see that "the times of the Gentiles" and "the fulness of the Gentiles" are two very different things.

Our chapter, as we have seen, introduces us to the

holy city,
the temple of God,
the altar,

and

them that worship {Rev. 11:1, 2}

-- all Jewish elements; and a people recognized as worshipping, not on Christian but on Jewish ground, and oppressed by the Gentiles outside. At this very time, too, God has His own special testimony. There are two witnesses. Their testimony is not of the heavenly calling, like ours, but they stand before the *God of the earth*, and assert His rights. They are like two olive-trees for fruitfulness, and two candlesticks as bearers of light in the midst of gross darkness. They do not bear the testimony of the gospel of the grace of God, but a miraculous and righteous testimony, like that of Moses in the days of hardened Pharaoh, and Elijah in the time of infidel Ahab. They testify to the reality of the living God, and are clothed in sackcloth, under a deep sense of the dishonor done to His holy and blessed name; they have power to shut heaven that it rain not, and to turn water into blood, and to smite the earth with plagues as often as they will. Moreover, they are not in the spirit of the grace of Christ, who prayed for His murderers, and returned blessing for cursing; but these witnesses are commissioned to execute vengeance on their enemies. This marks this testimony as coming on *after* the present gospel testimony shall have closed, and shows that the whole scene is characterized by Jewish and earthly *righteous principles*, and not by the gospel of the *grace of God*. It is an important point to

notice, because it proves that the gathering out of the members of the body of Christ by the gospel of the grace of God must have been finished before this opposite character of testimony is introduced. We cannot conceive that God would command, and give power by His Spirit to His servants, to

love their enemies {see Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27}

and

devour their enemies {see Rev. 11:5}

at the same time.

If any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed {Rev. 11:5}.

Their testimony will continue for twelve hundred and sixty days, which is equal to about forty and two months, or three years and a half. At the close of this *the beast*, or Man of Sin, is brought before us for the first time in the Revelation.

When they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and overcome them, and kill them {Rev. 11:7}.

To kill the body is all that man or Satan can do. Their dead bodies lie in the street of the city where our Lord was crucified -- - Jerusalem now comparable only to wicked Sodom and infidel Egypt; and both Jews and Gentiles look at their dead bodies for three days and a half, and will not permit them to be buried; and, as we might expect, because of their death, these *dwellers upon earth* rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another,

because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth {Rev. 11:10}.

Elijah was said to be a troubler of Israel, and God's true servants are a trouble to the world still, and ever must be, until Jesus is King over all the earth and every knee bows to Him. But God is the God of resurrection; and this is an idea far beyond the human intellect to conceive; and, as the resurrection of our Lord Jesus from the dead struck the ungodly with utter confusion, so here again God's own power in raising the dead and shaking the earth, will turn the merriment and rejoicing of the ungodly into fear and distress. Resurrection has been and will be God's way of vindicating His own servants and of publicly demonstrating the reality of His own truth. These faithful martyrs may lie in the street and appear only as worthless corpses and vanquished tormentors; but

after three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and *great fear* fell upon them that saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and *their enemies beheld them*. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand {Rev. 11:11-13}.

The effect of this was, that the survivors

were affrighted, and gave glory,

not to the God of the earth before whom these witnesses stood, and whose rights they contended for, but

to the God of *heaven* {Rev. 11:13}.

They were troubled and terrified, like many others have been, at what they saw and heard; but we do not read that they bowed to Jesus as the Lord of heaven and earth, and took refuge in Him as their Savior. Oh, no! the scene forcibly reminds us of our Lord's own testimony to the dire depravity of the human heart, which shows that, if man rejects God's own word, no visions or calamities will savingly arrest him.

If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead {Luke 16:31}.

This scene closes the parenthetical announcement between the sounding of the sixth and seventh trumpets. It is followed by the solemn statement,

The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly {Rev. 11:14}.

Chapter 12 – 14: The Jewish Remnant and the Great Tribulation

The twelfth chapter may be read in company with the thirteenth and fourteenth, as forming another distinct section of the apocalyptic book. Though the range extends from the birth of the Messiah to His return to tread the winepress of the wrath of God, yet it is principally occupied with the great events of the last half of Daniel's seventieth week. In the twelfth and thirteenth chapters, we have for the most part a record of events in relation to the earth -- Satan, the beast, and the false prophet being the principal actors in the scene; but in the fourteenth chapter we have an emerging into light, and God brought in upon the scene, and therefore it is not how things stand in relation to Satan and the beast, but how they stand in relation to God.

The instruction of the twelfth chapter is very extensive in its range, though the subject is especially Israel. It takes us back farther than any part of the Apocalypse, even to the birth of Jesus, and carries us on to the remnant in affliction, just before the Lord Himself appears as their deliverer. The woman spoken of in the first verse is described as

clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars (Rev. 12:1).

She is invested with supreme authority, and all light and rule are derived from, and are subordinate to her, as the moon's is to the sun. (Cp. Dan. 7:27.) We find in Genesis that one of Joseph's dreams was, that

the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to him {Gen. 37:9};

and when he told it to his father, Jacob understood that the dream referred to himself and the mother and brethren of Joseph; therefore he rebuked him, and said unto him,

What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee on the earth? (Gen. 37:9, 10).

The number twelve is the administrative rule of God in the hands of man. From all this we gather, that the woman, in the opening of our chapter, refers to the house of Israel, from which, according to the flesh, our Lord came.

Unto us a Child is born {Isa. 9:6};

for He was

the son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1),

and was

made of the seed of David, according to the flesh (Rom. 1:3);

thus connected with all the promises to Abraham, and all the royalties through David. Therefore we read in the next verse,

And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered {Rev. 12:2}.

There was, however, another wonder in heaven, which we are told, in the ninth verse, was that old serpent which is called the Devil, and Satan. This terrible being is presented to us as a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads (emblematic of his holding the sway of the Roman empire, and that the vision is of a time previous to the ten kings being crowned (Rev. 13:1), and drawing a third part of the stars of heaven with his tail, and casting them on the earth. This great devourer is followed in the train by those, perhaps potentates of the world, whose proper duty it was to rule in the fear of God, but who, by his drawing, come under his power.

The attitude which this awful dragon takes is that of watching for Messiah's birth, and to swallow Him up, if possible.

The dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born (Rev. 12:4).

Now, who can have attentively read the second chapter of Matthew without seeing how literally this was accomplished! Directly the birth of Jesus was announced,

Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled {see Matt. 2:3},

and the king, as if imbued fully with the subtlety of the great deceiver; though he professed a desire to

worship (Matt. 2:8)

Jesus, only had an earnest longing

to destroy Him (Matt. 2:13),

and afterwards in great wrath issued a command to put to death all the young children from two years old and under, hoping in this way to include the Son of God -- the man child, who should yet have the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. As we might expect, the entrance of Jesus into this world would be connected with a mighty opposing energy of Satan; so in no period of the Divine record do we find such hosts of Satanic powers working on the earth, and especially in the land of Israel, as during the days of our Lord in His flesh. We know, too, that though Herod's murderous scheme only turned out to his utter confusion -- to the complete failure of the roaring lion -- yet afterwards, as the wily serpent, he tempts the blessed Lord with,

If Thou be the Son of God, etc {Matt. 4:3-6}.

But, as at all other times, the great red dragon was so utterly confounded, that the

devil left Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him {see Matt. 4:11}.

From these records in the gospel it is clear that Satan was especially set upon devouring this man child.

We are further told,

And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to His throne {Rev. 12:5}.

This shows us that, however the hatred of Satan and man might rage, yet the God of resurrection could raise up Jesus from the dead, and seat Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies. And what child was ever born of a woman that will sway the universal sceptre, but Jesus? Who else shall rule the nations with a rod of iron, or break them to shivers as a potter's vessel, but Jesus? His death on the cross, instead of checking the onward course of this man child, only manifested God's love and man's wickedness, and was so infinitely meritorious to God, that we are told

He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, etc. {Phil. 2:8-11}.

So we read,

Her child was caught up unto God and to His throne.

It is ascension, prior to His taking future government (for there is nothing said about the life or even death of this man child), that is here brought out; and while the Church must always be included when the resurrection and ascension of Christ are brought out, nevertheless, the subject of this chapter is not the Church, but the history of those (of Israel especially) who suffer under Satan and his great minister, the Man of Sin, during the apocalyptic week. Though at present the people of Israel are virtually cut off, yet they are beloved for the fathers' sakes; and though the ten tribes are scattered to the four winds, God is able to gather them again to their own land; and, even before that, His eye will be upon a remnant, and He will bring them through the fire of unparalleled tribulation and anguish into their long promised blessing, when there shall be the days of heaven on the earth (Deut. 11:21).

The woman whom we have just before noticed as invested with dignity and glory, and giving birth to a man child who was to rule all nations, is now seen fleeing into the wilderness (Rev. 12:6). Here there is a great break of more than 1800 years in the chapter. It is a remnant of Jewish people under the oppression of Satan and the Man of Sin in the last half of Daniel's week. Their experience is often recorded in the psalms. (See Psa. 79 and 80.) Israel was the nation whom the Spirit of Christ called

His own {Psa. 78:52},

and one of its prophets had said,

Unto *us* a Child is born, unto *us* a Son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder (Isa. 9:6);

another prophet had declared that

Bethlehem Ephratah

should be the place from which He should come forth

that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2);

and other prophets predicted the unparalleled tribulation that the seed of Jacob will yet have to pass through -- the period referred to, I believe, in this and the following chapter. Jeremiah says,

Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it (Jer. 30:7).

Daniel also says,

There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time: and at that time thy people [always, in Daniel, referring to Israel] shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book (Dan. 12:1).

Before, however, "the woman" flees into the wilderness, the heaven must be cleared of Satan and his angels. Though in our chapter this is not the order of narration, yet we know that it is by his power that that master-piece of iniquity, "the Man of Sin," and his attendant evils, are brought about. Satan is still the deceiver of the world, and also the accuser of the brethren; but he will yet fall, like lightning from heaven, and be cast down to earth. After his horrible purposes have been accomplished, he shall be bound with a chain, and cast into the bottomless pit for a season, and after a thousand years let loose for a time, before he is banished to the eternal misery of the lake of fire. Satan seems to be aware of his doom; for the devils said to Jesus,

Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? {Matt. 8:29}.

The point in Satan's work which is referred to here is his being cast down from the heavenlies as

the accuser of our brethren {Rev. 12:10}.

What are we to understand by this? Is it not true that

the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience {Eph. 2:2},

has access into God's presence to accuse us there? There can be no doubt of this. We see it in Job.

When the sons of God came to present themselves *before the Lord*, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it. And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord (Job 1:6-12).

We find, also, when Joshua, the high-priest, is seen *standing before the angel of the Lord*, that Satan is also standing at his right hand (Zech. 3:1). In Ephesians we see Satan having access to the heavens, and our fight is described as against principalities and powers, against wicked spirits in heavenly places (see margin Eph. 6:12); that is, like as Joshua and the men of Israel fought against those who hindered their full possession and enjoyment of the land that God had given them and brought them into, so our character of conflict is not down here with flesh and blood, but with Satan and his host in the heavenlies, who seek to hinder our

enjoyment of that communion with the Father in the holiest of all, which we are brought into, through the riches of Divine grace in Christ, and through His blood. As Satan cannot swallow us up, because our life is hid with Christ in God, he does all that he can to hinder our fellowship with the Father, and to cast us down from the enjoyment of our high calling and standing in Christ:

They only consult to cast him down from his excellency (Psa. 62:4).

If we are abiding in Christ, we are impregnable to the devices of Satan. As to his being the accuser of the brethren, our consolation is, that Christ is in heaven as our Advocate, to meet every accusation; so that we need not fear. By the power of angelic agency, Satan and his hosts must yet be cast down; and let us remember, that angels, principalities, and powers are made subject unto Christ. We read that

Michael and his angels fought against the dragon and his angels {see Rev. 12:7};

but Satan, who is always opposed to the Lord Jesus, will resist, though it will be in vain:

The dragon fought, and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was *their place found any more in heaven* {Rev. 12:7, 8}.

The result will be, that Satan's power then will be wholly concentrated on earth; and as I presume that this will occur in

the midst of the week (see Dan. 9:27),

the Man of Sin will be then developed as fully energized by Satanic power, the whole world will be under such a delusion as to wonder after "the beast"; and "the woman," representing those of the Jews who stand out for the true God, will pass through the severest persecution. Hence we read,

The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. . . . Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time {Rev. 12:9-12}.

These verses, from the seventh to the twelfth inclusive, are clearly parenthetical, and therefore the sixth verse is taken up again in the fourteenth. The parenthesis seems purposely introduced, to account for the persecution of the woman, and the full development of the abomination which maketh desolate, the third and most dreadful woe to the inhabitants of the earth. We must not overlook, however, in this parenthesis, a loud voice (mark, not voices) which John heard in heaven at this time. It was a *voice*, saying,

Now is come salvation, and strength, and the *kingdom* of our God, and the *power* of His Christ {Rev. 12:10};

for clearing the heavens of Satan and his angels seems the first act of Christ in *power*, in relation to the *kingdom*. We notice that this voice is heard *in heaven*, and is accompanied with triumph at the casting down of Satan. Who it is that utters this voice we are not told; but the heavenly saints being at this time in heaven, like Abraham in the mount, who beheld the dreadful judgment and smoke of the doomed cities, but was not in them, so the saints in heaven will look down on the dreadful things coming upon the earth, and worship in the knowledge of the glory and power of Christ. By the expression,

our brethren {Rev. 12:10},

I understand the voice to refer to us who will then be around the throne of God in heaven, when it will be said,

The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death {Rev. 12:10, 11}.

Three things characterize these overcomers of Satan; first, they make the blood of the Lamb their confidence and shelter; secondly, they used the sword of the Spirit, the written word of God -- the word of their testimony; thirdly, they esteemed the love of Christ beyond the love of life; they could say,

Thy lovingkindness is better than life {Psa. 63:3}:

They *loved not* their lives unto the death {Rev. 12:11}.

Surely these are the three elements of vital Christianity.

There is another very important thought added. It is this:

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that *dwell in them*. Woe to the *inhabiters of the earth* {Rev. 12:12}

Here we have two distinct classes--those dwelling in heaven called on to rejoice, and those dwelling on earth under an awful woe. Now, I ask, are not those dwelling in heaven, who are called on to rejoice at the casting down of the accuser of the brethren, the heavenly saints? Again, besides the inhabitants of the earth generally, "the woman" who flies into the wilderness is especially the object of Satan's *wrath* and hatred. Surely it could not be strictly said, that he is in wrath with those who obey him, and are deceived by him at this time; it is, then, particularly against "the woman" who brought forth the man child that his wrath is directed. Therefore we find her distinguished in this chapter, as well as the dwellers in heaven and the inhabitants of the earth. The saints in heaven had overcome by the blood of the Lamb; the woman who keeps the commandments of God is persecuted by Satan and his allies on earth. With regard to the woman's flight, we are told in Matt. 24, that when the Man of Sin is developed, that is, when the abomination of desolation is set up, of which Daniel prophesied concerning his city and people,

Then,

said our Lord,

let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: . . . But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day {Matt. 24:16-20}.

However much the flight of many at the siege of Jerusalem was like this, the following verse, and also the fifteenth, show that it can only have its full accomplishment in the days of the Man of Sin, in Israel's last or seventieth week spoken of by Daniel.

For then shall be great tribulation, such as *was not* since the beginning of the world to this time, no, *nor ever shall be*. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved (Matt. 24:21, 22).

Accordingly, as the result of the dragon's hatred and persecution, the woman {Rev. 12:6}

of our chapter is seen fleeing into the wilderness: but she is still the object of God's care; for she is not only helped in her flight with

two wings of a great eagle {Rev. 12:14},

but a place there is prepared of God for her, and she is nourished from the face of the serpent for a thousand two hundred and threescore days, or a time, times, and half a time. (Compare verses 6 and 14.) Satan, however, still pursues her, and he casts water out of his mouth as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. But as the prophet said,

When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him (Isa. 59:19);

so God, in His providential care over the persecuted remnant, will cause a wonderful deliverance, and shield her from the overflowing scourge of her mighty foe. We are told that

the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth (Rev. 12:16).

But though Satan is disappointed and confounded in his pursuit of those who flee into the wilderness, his wrath is not lessened, and it would seem as if, giving up those of Judæa who had fled into the wilderness, he found

the *remnant of her seed* {Rev. 12:17}

elsewhere; it may be in the city of Jerusalem. These are characterized by being faithful to Moses' law, and having the oracles of God: they

keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 12:17).

The malice of Satan against the godly is remarkably brought out in this chapter. *Now* his hatred and power are directed against the Church of God, because it is God's present witness in the earth, she testifies of God's perfect love, and the unsearchable riches of Christ, she glories in the Cross, waits for the Son from heaven, and knows the world to be deceitful and doomed. Now the manifold wisdom of God is known by the Church unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies; but *after* the Church has been caught up, and God has other witnesses, *then* Satan's wickedness and enmity will be directed against them. But they are objects of God's care, beloved for the fathers' sakes; and when they call upon God in the day of trouble, He will deliver them, and they shall glorify Him. They are on Jewish ground, keeping the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ, that is, the Scriptures which testify of Christ, the prophetic word concerning the coming kingdom and glory of Messiah. Hence we are told that

the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10),

and this prophetic book, the Revelation, is called

the testimony of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:2).

Their pleading, however, in the 79th and 80th Psalms, is very remarkable. After praying for

wrath {Psa. 79:6}

and

the revenging of blood {Psa. 79:10}

upon the heathen, and complaining of God's beautiful vineyard which He had planted for Himself being cut down, etc., they say,

Let Thy hand be upon the *man of Thy right hand*, upon the *son of man whom* Thou madest strong for Thyself. So will not we go back from Thee: quicken us, and we will call upon Thy name. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause Thy face to shine; and we shall be saved {Psa. 80:17-19}. (See also Psa. 58.)

The unparalleled manifestation of diabolical and human blasphemy is seen in the thirteenth chapter. Satan finds one to accept at his hand the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, which Jesus refused. He who was a liar and murderer from the beginning has been most successful in his deceivings by being an imitator of God. We often see this in Scripture. God has wise virgins; Satan has virgins also -- false. Christ sows good seed -- wheat; Satan sows seed too -- tares. God has a vine --

the true vine {John 15:1};

Satan has a vine also --

the vine of the earth {Rev. 14:18, 19}.

Christ has a bride; Satan has a harlot. God has a city -- the New Jerusalem; Satan has also a city -- Babylon. But none of his imitations seem so vile as in this chapter, none so perfect in blasphemy against God. For instance, God had *a man*, His well-beloved Son, to bear witness for Him in the earth. Satan will have *a man* also -- the Man of Sin. God did

miracles, and wonders, and signs {Acts 2:22},

by Jesus of Nazareth; Satan's Servant will come too,

with *all* power, and signs, and lying wonders (2 Thess. 2:9) (compare Acts 2:22 with 2 Thess. 2:9);

God will have *all* worship Jesus, and bow the knee to Him, for He is worthy; Satan also will have *all* that dwell upon the earth to worship "the beast," whose names are not written in the book of life. The saints of God will have His name

in their foreheads {Rev. 14:1, 22:4};

so the worshipers of "the beast" will receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads. But worse than all is the direct blasphemy against God. The gospel of the grace of God now gives testimony to the love and wisdom and power of the triune God -- Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; so we see in this chapter, that Satan has a trio also -- the beast, the false prophet, and the image that doth speak -- all energized by one lying spirit, all united in blaspheming God and deceiving men. This infernal scheme, venting itself in direct antagonism to Christ, seems to fill up the measure of iniquity, and bring speedy vengeance from heaven by the glorious appearing of the Son of man in power and great glory, who will consume this wicked one with the Spirit of His mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of His coming. Both the beast and the false prophet will then be cast alive at once into

the lake of fire burning with brimstone (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:20).

Happy for us to know, that

when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).

Satan having been cast out of heaven into the earth, as recorded in the previous chapter, we are not surprised at finding this chapter commencing with the rising up of the beast. The apostle says,

I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the names of blasphemy (Rev. 13:1).

He rises up out of the sea; which teaches us that he had been previously hid from the eye of man. Coming out of the sea may, perhaps, mean that he issues from peoples more or less civilized. Daniel saw also the great Gentile powers emerge from the sea: They

came up from the sea {Dan. 7:3}.

There were four great beasts. The first like *a lion*, the second like *a bear*, the third like *a leopard*, and

the fourth beast dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up *among* them *another little horn*, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the *eyes of man*, and a *mouth speaking great things*. I beheld till the Ancient of days did sit, etc. (Dan. 7:3-8).

This was Daniel's vision of the great Gentile powers. The beast which John saw seems to include the whole of these great beasts; for he says,

The beast which I saw was like unto *a leopard*, and his feet were as the feet of *a bear*, and his mouth as the mouth of *a lion* . . . and there was given to him *a mouth speaking great things* (Rev. 13:2, 5).

The times of the Gentiles will be then still running on in the fourth or Roman empire -- the legs of the image with its ten toes; or, as we have just seen, the ten-horned beast with its ten crowns -- all, it would seem, personified in the first beast of the Apocalypse, or the little horn of Daniel, with man's eyes, and mouth speaking great things. He is one under direct Satanic inspiration and power -- he ascends out of the bottomless pit; and we are further told, that Satan

gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority {Rev. 13:2}.

Daniel's little horn intimates that he issues from the Roman earth; and from the statement,

Neither shall he regard the God of *his fathers* (Dan. 11:37),

we may expect that he will be a Jew. He will have the iron teeth, and dreadful and terrible strength of the fourth monarchy; for it will be said,

Who is *able* to make war with him? {Rev. 13:4}.

We must remember, that although the development of the beast will not take place till the hindering power the Church indwelt by the Holy Ghost -- is removed, and Satan is cast out into the earth, yet that

the mystery of iniquity (2 Thess. 2:7)

was working in Paul's day, and is still going on. John saw it also, and said,

Even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time (1 John 2:18).

The antichristian principle is working all around us, and growing rapidly; and we need grace and spiritual power from God to discern the evil, and flee from it. Sight and sense are not enough; for there is power with Satan's work; and he imitates God as far as he can, so as to be more effectual in deceiving. The soul taught by the Holy Ghost, and in subjection to the written Word, thus walking by faith and not by sight, trusting to the living God, and not leaning to his own understanding, is alone able to stand with God, or walk with God. Seeing that self-will and self-exaltation will characterize the Man of Sin, let us watch against these two evils, which are in every one of our hearts by nature, and let us seek to be conformed to our blessed Jesus, who was meek and lowly in heart, and who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!

Perhaps it is difficult to say what we are to understand by

one of his heads, as it were wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed {Rev. 13:3},

further than, that if it does not carry us back to the old Roman empire -- defunct as it has been, but again to arise -- then it must be some check given to the beast's success after he is manifested; but it is only for a time; for he is restored again, and comes forth under the flattery of a world-wide admiration:

All the world wondered after the beast (Rev. 13:3).

It is to be observed, that this period will be characterized by devil-worship; for "the dragon," that is, the devil and Satan (Rev. 12:9), who gave power unto the beast, will be "worshipped" (Rev. 13:4). The beast, too, will be worshipped; for

all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain (Rev. 13:8).

Those who have been watching the moral changes and course of events for many years, must have noticed the rapid increase of irreverence for the things of God, the steady advance of infidelity, and the earnestness with which many have fallen in with spirit-rapping and consulting with familiar spirits; and, by men accustoming themselves to such things, we can understand how gradually the great deceiver is paving the way for the development of his wickedness, which is so soon to be connected with open infidelity and blasphemy. The well-instructed child of God cannot but observe the occurrence of remarkable events, especially of late, and see that the day of the Lord is approaching with great rapidity. Saints are expected to *see* this, and are therefore taught to assemble themselves together, and to exhort one another; and so much the more as they *see* the *day approaching* (Heb. 10:25). *The day of the Lord* is not set before us, strictly speaking, as our hope; but the Lord Himself. He is

the one hope of our calling (1 Thess. 1:10),

and we are to serve God, and wait for *His Son from heaven*. He says to us,

Surely, I come quickly {Rev. 22:20}!

and our response should be,

Even so, come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}!

But while thus in a waiting posture for Christ, many events may and do occur which show us that the day is approaching -- the day when Christ will be manifested in glory with His saints -- the day of the world's judgment, and of Israel's restoration and blessing. But the calling, standing, and hope of the Church, is heavenly.

Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ (Phil. 3:20).

In fact, prophecy relates for the most part to the earth; but, as members of Christ's body, while taking heed to the sure word of prophecy, and learning much of God in tracing His dealings in the earth, we are instructed to look for the Lord Himself, who shall descend from heaven with a shout, when those who are alive and remain, and all the dead in Christ, shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

To return to our chapter. We find that this time of pride and blasphemy is limited. It will

continue forty and two months (Rev. 13:5).

Daniel also speaks of power given to this enemy for a time, times, and the dividing of time. Regarding "time" as being equivalent to a year, as the marginal reading of Dan. 11:13, "times, even years," would seem to warrant, both these periods would be exactly three years and a half; the period of the half of the last week of Daniel, during which the beast will continue in open manifestation, after having caused the sacrifice and oblation to cease (Dan. 9:27). The beast will not only speak great things, but will open his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle or dwelling, and them that dwell in heaven (Rev. 13:6). It is remarkable that we get the *dwellers in heaven* noticed again here, as we observed in the previous chapter (Rev. 12:12); and the more so because we find "saints" under the oppression of the beast in the next verse. Now, if we understand the dwellers in heaven to be the heavenly saints, who, ere this period, have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, who are the "saints" brought before us here? It may be well to notice, that "saint" is not a title peculiar to the New Testament. Daniel repeatedly speaks of the saints, and as on the earth too during the time of the Antichrist. But Daniel does not speak of the Church; his prophecies are concerning his city and people. He says,

He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out *the saints of the Most High* (Dan. 7:25).

He also says,

The horn made war with *the saints*, and prevailed against them . . . and the time came that *the saints* possessed the kingdom (Dan. 7:21, 22).

There is no mention here of resurrection or rapture, and therefore they cannot be the Church. He also intimates that some will be brought through this great tribulation; for he tells us,

At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that is written in the book (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 13:7, 8).

The prophet Daniel thus speaks of saints, evidently Jewish, who are brought through the fire into their own promised blessing in the earth. Jeremiah calls it the time of *Jacob's* trouble. Our Lord also says, that

for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened {Matt. 24:22}.

If they were not shortened, the oppression of the beast would go on to exterminate all who do not worship him; so that

except those days should be shortened, there would *no flesh be saved* {Matt. 24:22}.

Israel is called repeatedly in Scripture God's "elect." On comparing Matt. 24:31 with Isa. 27:12, 13, it will be clearly seen that the "elect" there mentioned are not the Church, but the seed of Jacob. Isa. 45:4; 65:9, 22, also show that Israel is called God's "elect." Another prophet says, that in all the land two parts shall be cut off and die, and that God will bring a third part of them *through the fire*, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried:

They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God (Zech. 13:8, 9).

All these are clearly people suffering great tribulation on the earth, and brought through it into blessing; like Noah and his family, carried through the tribulation, and brought into the purged earth. With these prophecies our chapter agrees. We are told,

It was given unto him to make war with *the saints*, and to overcome them. . . . He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. *Here is the patience and the faith of the saints* (Rev. 13:7-10).

This shows us that many are killed, and some are brought through: -- they overcome, not by carnal weapons, but by faith and patience. This is the Divine rule, that no flesh shall glory in God's presence. The saints, in the great tribulation, will have to learn that

by strength shall no man prevail {1 Sam 2:9}.

They will not overcome by their own sword or power; for

he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword, etc.

God will then be glorified, as He is now, by patient faith; hence it is added,

Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

They will be fully delivered by the personal return of the Messiah in glory, and be brought into the millennial blessing. Those who are faithful unto death, and lose their earthly inheritance, will have a place in the first resurrection (as we learn from Rev. 20:4), and reign with Christ. The time of Nebuchadnezzar is remarkably typical of the period we have been contemplating. The king, in self-will and pride, set up a golden image, and commanded all on pain of death to bow down to it. Nearly all obeyed. A very few were the exceptions. They refused to worship the image, and were faithful to the living and true God; they suffered and overcame, not by sword, but by faith and patience. They were cast into the fiery furnace. God was with them in it, and delivered them out of it. They were brought into greater honor and blessing in the earth than they had ever known before. The infidel king was abased, and their oppressors consumed. So will it be in the days of the beast.

Happy, those whose citizenship is in heaven, who are partakers of the heavenly calling, and members of the body of Christ; for as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall

also bear the image of the heavenly. In a little while He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

The second beast, or false prophet, is now brought before us. So apostate is the earth, the place of civilization, that it gives forth this false Messiah. This man, and the first beast are both spoken of in the 19th chapter as persons, and receive special judgment from Christ at His coming (Dan. 7:11; Rev. 19:20). The first beast, as we saw, seems identified with the Roman empire, and is characterized by power and blasphemy. The second beast, though coming in his own name, a false Christ, *comes up out of the earth*, instead of *from heaven*, as the true Christ. He will have some outward semblance of the meek and lowly Jesus; but in his heart he is devilish, and

out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh {Matt. 12:34}.

He had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon (Rev. 13:11).

How unlike that blessed One who spake as never man spake, and concerning whom the people

wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth {Luke 4:22}!

He was able to speak a word in season to him that was weary, to bind up the brokenhearted, to heal every sin-sick soul, to comfort the mourner, to invite all the weary and heavy-laden to His own bosom for rest, and He cast out none that came to Him. He pleased not Himself. His heart of matchless love was set upon doing good. No case was sunk too low for His arm of mercy to reach, no one was too vile for His love to minister unto. In short, the Cross of Calvary was the only way in which His sinner-loving heart could fully manifest itself, and there He accomplished the work of eternal redemption for all those who take refuge in His precious blood. Surely He was full of grace and truth!

"On such love my soul shall ponder,
Love so vast, so full, so free;
Say, why lost in holy wonder,
Why, O Lord, such love to me?
Hallelujah!
Grace shall reign eternally."

How different, then, was He who came in His Father's name to him who will come in his own name (John 5:43). The false prophet, we are informed, exerciseth all the power of the first beast, and that, too, in his presence. The two are clearly one in heart, mind, and power. It is unity, but diabolical. The power is from beneath. He bows almost all hearts to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He works miracles, and they are mighty to deceive all those who walk by sight and sense. How solemn to think that these things are shortly about to come to pass. How busily the powers of darkness are engaged to bring about this crisis; and how needful that believers should believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, and test everything by the written word.

Christ wrought miracles, and so will the false Christ; for, as we have previously noticed, Satan deceives by imitating. The counterfeit of true Christianity is all around us, and is rapidly going into infidelity. In days of old, God's power was manifested in fire coming down from heaven to consume the burnt offering and the fat (Lev. 9:24). Again, there went out fire from the Lord

in devouring judgment on those who sinned in His service (Lev. 1:2). When Solomon finished the building of the temple, the presence and power of God were manifested by fire coming down from heaven and consuming the burnt offering and sacrifices (2 Chron. 7:3). We also find, that when Elijah testified for the living and true God before the apostate Israelites, God answered His servant by sending down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice (1 Kings 18). Afterwards, the prophet brought fire down from heaven and consumed the captains and fifties which the king sent for him (2 Kings 1). And so Satan, in the apocalyptic period, will energize the false Christ to deceive, by making fire to come down from heaven. We read that

he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do, in the sight of the beast (Rev. 13:13, 14).

This is the time of the "strong delusion" which Paul referred to when he said,

For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2:11, 12).

Our chapter still further unfolds the deluding power of the false prophet. He commands men to

make an image to the beast . . . and he had power to give breath unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should . . . speak (Rev. 13:14, 15). {See also in JND's translation.}

How terrible is this miraculous power of the wicked one -- to give breath and speech to a dead, corruptible image of man's fashioning! How can those possibly escape the snare, who pride themselves on their intellectual powers, and boast of the light of reason and the potency of scientific research? What can philosophy say to this? Where can the reasoner hide himself? What will the freethinker's argument avail now? The unhesitating reply is, that all, save those whose trust is in God, and whose eye is on His revealed word, will be willingly enveloped in this thick cloud of strong delusion, and worship the beast. They will be like the luxurious Babylonians, and all the surrounding nations, languages, and tongues, who fell down to worship the image that Nebuchadnezzar set up, at the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music. This sure word of prophetic testimony shines like a bright light upon the believer's path. It shows us where the present workings are tending, and what a fearful crisis is at hand. We dare not shut our eyes to the elements that are abounding on every side so calculated to exalt man, set aside truth, dishonor God, and bring in the flood of infidelity, that makes ready for this terrible delusion. Happy indeed are those who are born again of the Spirit, and whose only standing now before the Lord is on the ground of the precious blood of Christ! Such have peace with God, are delivered from the power of darkness, are translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and are commanded by the Holy Ghost to rejoice in the Lord always, and to give thanks to the Father for having made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. How precious is Jesus to such. Their song is --

"Oh, *I am my Beloved's*,
And my Beloved's mine!
He brings a poor, vile sinner
Into His 'house of wine.'

I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
in Immanuel's land."

In the days of "the beast" there will be no room for neutrality, or for men to content themselves, as many do now, by making no profession at all. Men must either be for God or for Satan. Then the words of Jesus, so slurred over now, will be fully proved --

He that is not with me is against me {Matt. 12:30;
Luke 11:23}.

It really is so now, only it is not manifested. There will be the sentence of death then upon all who will not worship the beast. Those who do so will receive a mark, in order that those who do not bow down to the beast may be distinguished, and be known as men that none should either buy or sell with. There will be no exception. Neither riches, age, influence, nor rank, will avail anything. Shall Christ or Antichrist be obeyed and worshipped? will be the question. We are told that he had power to

cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (Rev. 13:15-17).

How injurious to souls, and destructive to the spread of the truth of God, is the mistaken thought, that the millennium is to be brought in by the gradual spread of the gospel. Alas! what awaits this poor doomed world! Who can say but that many around us may be taken in this snare which is coming on the face of the whole earth, and be led on by Satan to this time of "strong delusion"? How earnest it should make us in seeking the salvation of souls! and how responsible we are not to help on the spirit of worldliness, which is infidelity, and thus aid Satan in deceiving, instead of our being lights in the world!

With regard to the number of the beast, many have been the conjectures. It is better, however, to confess our ignorance where we have not clear light. Daniel tells us, that

the wise shall understand {Dan. 12:10};

so, when it is necessary, we may be assured that there will be no difficulty. We are informed that it is the

number of a man, and his number is 6 6 6 {Rev. 13:18}.

This shows us at least that there is no rest or perfection in connection with the beast; for the number seven speaks to us both of perfection and rest. We have repeatedly called attention to the former point in our previous meditations. With regard to the latter, we are told that God rested on the *seventh* day. It is a Sabbath number. But with all the popularity, unity, power, and miracles of the beast, his number is that of a man -- fallen, apostate man, in league with Satan, and has no element of perfection or rest in its constitution. Perfection and rest, I need scarcely say, are the two special characteristics of the gospel. It tells us of the perfection of the person of Jesus the Son of God, of whom the Father could say,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased
{Matt. 3:17, 17:5; 2 Pet. 1:17};

and the finished work of redemption which He accomplished on the cross, a savour of rest to God, and gives rest also to the sinner that believes.

"Jesus, I rest in Thee;
Myself in Thee I hide;
Laden with guilt and misery,
Where could I rest beside?
'Tis on Thy meek and lowly breast
My weary soul alone can rest.

"Thou holy One of God!
The Father rests in Thee;
And in the savour of that blood,
Which speaks to Him for me.
The curse is gone; through Thee I'm blest;
God rests in Thee, in Thee I rest."

The actings of the beast are repeatedly referred to in the following chapters of the Revelation; for his course is contemplated until the Lord Himself returns with His saints, as seen in the nineteenth chapter; so that we shall again have to notice his ways. May we be so able to bring the light of the future on our present path, that it may have practical power on our hearts and ways!

In the fourteenth chapter we have several distinct actions, but each giving us God's mind in relation to things then connected with the earth.

1. We have God and the Lamb in relation to the remnant of Israel.
2. God's testimony of the everlasting gospel to an apostate world.
3. God's witness to the fall of Babylon.
4. God's warning against worshiping the beast.
5. A voice from heaven pronouncing blessing on those who henceforth die in the Lord.
6. The harvest of the earth.
7. The vintage, or treading the winepress of the wrath of God.

Let us now look a little more particularly at each of these actions.

1. *The Remnant of Israel*

John says,

I looked, and; lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name (or, according to the best copies, His name and His Father's name) written in their foreheads {Rev. 14:1}.

They are presented in blessed rest and companionship with the Lamb. They are servants of God, sealed in their foreheads; and however much they had been oppressed by the beast, nevertheless they are seen as having proved the faithfulness of Jehovah, and the sure abiding of His word of promise, in caring for them and exercising His own power in bringing them through the fire. John, who had before seen them so hotly pursued by Satan, now has a vision of them with the Lamb; and not only so, but on mount

Zion, the place of promised blessing on the earth, the metropolis of past and future national glory -- the mountain, not of Sinai blackness and darkness, but the place of royal grace, where David and Solomon were honored by Jehovah, and where again the true Messiah, the greater than Solomon, shall yet manifest His wondrous power and grace, bring glory to His people Israel, and reign before His ancients gloriously. These hundred and forty and four thousand at that time will be blessed in the earth. It is prospective; for they can only be there with the Lamb after His appearing. They have not *their* Father's name, but *His* Father's name, written in their foreheads. Those who compose the Church of God, the body of Christ, -- are a heavenly people, they know their sonship, have received the indwelling Spirit, the Spirit of adoption, and know God as *their* Father. But these are not the Church; yet, like every redeemed company, whether heavenly or earthly, they owe all their blessings to the Lamb; for the blood of the Cross is the foundation of all lasting good.

While John was thus beholding this favoured remnant, he heard

a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder {Rev. 14:2}.

He heard also

the voice of harpers harping with their harps {Rev. 14:2}.

These, too, were heavenly sounds; for he goes on to tell us that

they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and *the elders* {see Rev. 14:3}

Let the reader notice here, that we have, first, the company on mount Zion; secondly, the elders in heaven; and, thirdly, *harpers* harping before the elders. Here are three distinct companies -- one on earth, and two in heaven; and though all are redeemed and brought into their blessing by the blood of the Lamb, it is impossible to identify them, or to regard them as only different visions of the same company, for reasons assigned when considering the seventh chapter. The question for us now is, Who are the harpers?

1. We are distinctly told they are in heaven, singing as it were a new song *before the elders*.

2. There seems to be a remarkable sympathy between the "harpers" and the hundred and forty-four thousand on mount Zion, for *no man* but these could learn their song.

3. We only get one company in the Revelation having harps besides the elders in the fifth chapter, and these are that part of the faithful remnant who are martyred for not worshipping the beast, who get the victory over him by having a place in heaven on the sea of glass, and to them are given the *harps of God*. They are described in chapter 15 as singing the song of victory and of the Lamb; but it is Jewish in character, for they sing *the song of Moses*. They will reign with Christ. But further. In this first action in the chapter before us, the remnant are clearly spoken of as on mount Zion with the Lamb, as redeemed, as learning directly from heaven to sing the new song. We can understand what true sympathy there will be between the spared remnant on earth and the slaughtered remnant in heaven. We may notice further, that the hundred and forty-four thousand are called virgins, and have escaped the foul defilement of an adulterous generation; they have been true to God, and are only now engaged in following the

Lamb whithersoever He goeth. In their mouth is found no guile or lie, and they are without fault. The last words,

Before the throne of God {Rev. 14:5},

are omitted by the best critics. We must regard this first scene, in Rev. 14, on earth as anticipative, and as existing at the same time as the harpers seen in heaven in chapter 15.

There are two other points deserving special notice in the description here given of the remnant on mount Zion. First, they are redeemed from the earth from among men, the firstfruits unto God and the Lamb (Rev. 14:3, 4); and, secondly, they were faithful to God. The first point is of importance, because it shows us that this company is on the mount of earthly favour and blessing, redeemed from the earth -- an election from among the people of Israel for the earth. There is no thought here of the Church, the body of Christ. It is a remnant of Israel, which will be brought through the great tribulation into the millennial blessing. With regard to their being the "firstfruits," we are to understand the firstfruits from the earth for earthly blessing: the harvest of the earth is to follow. They, are pure and uncorrupted,

for they are virgins {Rev. 14:4}.

Living in a time when violence and the foulest corruption fill the earth, when the world is overrun with infidelity, men are under the

strong delusion {2 Thess. 2:11},

and the only Lord God in every way denied, they stand boldly out for the living and true God, and refuse to worship the beast; they are therefore not defiled, and in their mouth was found no guile -- the lie of the beast. The power of the God of Abraham encircled them; and brought them through the time of temptation, and they are now with the Lamb, following Him whithersoever He goeth, and are without fault, or blameless.

2. The Everlasting Gospel

This is a remarkable testimony. It would seem to be the last before the great and terrible day of the Lord. The faithful had gone out with "the gospel of the kingdom," and some of them had been put to death (Rev. 6:9). The two witnesses also testified, as we have seen in the eleventh chapter, until the beast killed them. And now the seer at Patmos says, that he saw

an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel, etc. (Rev. 14:6)

We must not confound the different ways in which "gospel" is brought before us in the word of God. We have "the gospel preached to Abraham," promising blessing through his seed. The gospel for the land of Canaan (Heb. 4:2). We read also of "the gospel of Christ," which testifies of Christ's work, -- redemption through His blood. We have also "the gospel of God," which enters into the eternal purpose, grace, and glory of God in our salvation in Christ, and through His blood. Then we have what Paul called his gospel --

my gospel {Rom. 2:16, 16:25; 2 Tim. 2:8};

which may include

the mystery {Rom. 16:25}

revealed to him of the oneness of believers with Christ the Head in heaven. We read also of

the gospel of the kingdom {Matt. 4:23, 9:35; Mark 1:14},

which promises blessing in the earth to the faithful when Messiah shall appear, when it will be seen that those who endure to the end shall be saved. But here we have the

everlasting gospel.

At a time when infidelity and

great delusion {see 2 Thess. 2:11}

have overspread the world, and God is denied, not only as Redeemer, but also as Creator, when man will set himself up above all that is called God and be worshipped, this testimony to the living God, which has been true in all ages, and will be for ever, goes forth, that God is worthy to be acknowledged and glorified by man. It implies that there will be blessing to those who, refusing to worship the beast, do homage to the living and true God. The testimony is,

Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters (Rev. 14:7).

It is proclaimed with

a loud voice

to them that

dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people (Rev. 14:6, 7).

It seems to be God's last publication of glad tidings, just before the time of actual judgment arrives, and it asks simply that the living God, the Creator, be given glory to, and owned and feared. Blessing in the earth has always been connected with the acknowledgment of the Creator.

To what a terrible crisis men are hastening! How lamentable is the fact, that, with all the world's boast of Christianity and enlightenment, Christ is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on those who *know not God*, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, -- who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. But where will the Church be then? Blessed be God, we shall be vessels of mercy filled with Christ, and bringing glory and admiration to Christ, through what will be seen of Him in us.

When He shall come to be glorified IN

-- not with, but *in* --

His saints and to be admired IN all them that believe {2 Thess. 1:10}.

Then the world will believe that the Father sent His Son to die for sinners, and that He loves us even as He loves Jesus.

"Jesus, Thou art enough

The mind and heart to fill;

Thy life-to calm the anxious soul

Thy love-its fear dispel.

"O fix our earnest gaze,

So wholly, Lord, on Thee,

That, with Thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see."

3. The Fall of Babylon

Babylon is doomed. Her fall, which is by the hand of God, precedes the coming of the Lord. It has both a civil and religious aspect, and is a mighty system permeating almost every other, spreading its influence among all nations and ranks. It is a terribly corrupting system, dwelling in ease and luxury, and supported by the strength of the nations. She now says in her heart,

I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow {Rev. 18:7}.

But her loftiness must be laid low, her glitter pass away, her delusions exposed, and her adultery judged. Hence the announcement from heaven --

Babylon is fallen, is fallen . . . because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication {Rev. 14:8}.

Ah, how little do men think they are under a terribly deceiving power, when they take the intoxicating drink from the cup of this false system. So important a consideration is Babylon in the mind of God, that two chapters are occupied with its details, which we hope to consider in due time. Here her fall is simply announced.

4. God's Warning Against Worshiping the Beast

This testimony follows the two previous announcements, and is most plain, solemn, and decisive. It reminds us of another inspired testimony --

If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha {1 Cor. 16:22};

that is, accursed when the Lord cometh. How few think that we are rapidly hastening to this fearful crisis! Alas! man's pride and self-will hurry him on to judgment. This awful warning seems to be the last before Christ is actually revealed from heaven, and it is uttered with a loud voice:

If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his right hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name (Rev. 14:9-11).

Nothing can be plainer or more awful -- drinking God's wrath, having no rest; and tormented day and night for ever and ever. Let us try to think of its dread reality; for it might make us more in earnest with souls, and more decided in our testimony. Multitudes are acting on the *principles* of the beast and his image, little thinking that by setting aside the authority of the Scriptures, and acting out a religiousness according to their own mind and will, they are thus helping on the work of the great deceiver, and rushing onward to the impending crisis.

The Lord pauses after this announcement to notice again the patience of the saints, the remnant who are passing through the fiery tribulation. Their zeal for the observance of God's

commandments -- the law of Moses -- and also their faith in the coming Messiah, are not overlooked by Him.

5. *The Voice From Heaven*

This is very remarkable, but beautifully fitting in with the character of the whole chapter. For one of the faithful remnant of Israel to die at this time would not be considered by them at all desirable, because they are expecting the Messiah to appear, and are looking forward to enjoy the glorious land with Him. This voice from heaven, therefore, is very tender of the Lord, and will be particularly cheering to any of those who may suffer death under the beast; for it assures them that they are still "blessed." Though they die before Messiah comes to reign, and thus lose their earthly inheritance, yet being in the Lord they are peculiarly the "blessed"; and while the worshipers of the beast have no rest day nor night, they shall

rest from their labours, and their works do follow them
{Rev. 14:13}.

They will have part in

the first resurrection {Rev. 20:4-6}.

There is nothing new in its being blessed to die in the Lord; but the peculiar application of this action to those who are the faithful in Israel is very interesting, and shows the graciousness of God.

From henceforth {Rev. 14:13}

shows that they get into their blessing immediately.

6. *The Harvest of the Earth*

We have had the "firstfruits" of the earth, now we have

the harvest of the earth {Rev. 14:15}.

This is reaped at the coming of the Lord. The prophetic testimony to Israel was, not only that when the Messiah came He would tread down the wicked as ashes under the soles of His feet, but that, as the Sun of righteousness, He would arise upon Israel with healing in His wings. Thus blessing to the elect nation, and judgment on the wicked, attends the revelation of the Lord from heaven. Isaiah says of this time,

The day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come {Isa. 63:4}.

We get some account of the former in the concluding action of this chapter, and it is more fully brought out in the nineteenth chapter.

The harvest of the earth

shows us the latter. It is the Son of man, making the cloud His chariot, as in Rev. 1:7, crowned with a golden crown, and having in His hand a sharp sickle, with which He gathers to His bosom the fruit of His own sowing. Angels are associated with the Lord in the work. It is evidently the end of the age of Matt. 13, when the wheat is gathered into the barn; and the next action shows us the tares under the wrath of God. There is no idea here of the resurrection of the dead, or of any being removed to heaven, but of gathering the living righteous -- reaping the wheat. A separation between good and bad, and judgment on the latter, constitute the instruction of the last two scenes in this chapter. The Lord is coming to establish His millennial kingdom in righteousness. He

will therefore sever the wicked from among the just, and take out of His kingdom them that offend and do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire. The seer says,

I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle, and the earth was reaped (Rev. 14:14-16).

7. *Treading the Winepress*

This is not the harvest, but the vintage, gathering and treading grapes fully ripe. Now Satan works in sowing tares, and God bears with it till the iniquity is full. Christ is the true vine, and Israel is called a vine brought out of Egypt; but this is called

the vine of *the earth* {Rev. 14:16}.

Not connected with Christ risen and ascended into heaven; it is carnal, Satanic, *earthly* religion. The tares are the children of the wicked one. It may be apostate Jews and apostate Gentiles, but now they are fully ripe. They have unmixed judgment -- wrath without any mercy. The extent is beyond anything the world has ever known. It may be figurative, but we are surely to understand by it its unparalleled character.

And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs (Rev. 14:20).

Chapters 15, 16: The Martyred Remnant And the Seven Seals

{Introduction}

In these two chapters we have another section of the book, which gives us the account of the outpouring of the seven vials. Terrible judgments as they are, they are followed by the Lord Himself coming in flaming fire. But, as we have previously seen in the Apocalypse, so here, the heart is relieved from the sorrows of the outpoured wrath of God, by a parenthetic announcement of a saved remnant standing in joy and blessing before the throne.

The fifteenth chapter opens by telling us, that John

saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God {Rev. 15:1}.

It is sad to think that the awful doom which awaits men is so unheeded. God speaks once, yea, twice, but man perceiveth it not. We have traced the opening of the seven seals, and the sounding of the seven trumpets in all their various characters of judgment, and now the last actings of Divine wrath, prior to the Lord taking everything into His own hands, are brought before us. It is the wrath of God in these chapters; the wrath of the Lamb will follow.

But before the prophet witnesses in the vision the long-deserved writhings of the profane, his eye is drawn to the sea of glass before the throne of God. In the fourth chapter, we noticed

a sea of glass like unto crystal {Rev. 4:6},

and unpeopled; but here it is mingled with fire, referring, perhaps, to the fiery trial of Antichrist which they had passed through, and occupied by them

that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name {Rev. 15:2}.

They are seen standing upon the sea of glass, in the attitude of thanksgiving and rejoicing, having

harps of God {Rev. 15:2};

all expressive of marvelous deliverance and victory. They had known the deep sorrow and distress of the time of Jacob's trouble, and they got victory over the beast, not by an arm of flesh, but by faith; and though by death they lost the place of blessing on the earth, they found it more than made up by a place of resurrection-joy and gladness given them before the throne of God.

Who are the people here spoken of? Let their own utterances tell us. They do not sing the new song of the fifth chapter, or the song of the seventh chapter; neither are they described as coming out of every nation, as we find there; but they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. It is a song of redemption, both by power and by blood; but why the song of Moses? Is it not to show us that the singers are on Old Testament

ground -- in other words, pious Jews, faithful to Moses' law, and hoping for the kingdom to be set up on earth? Are not these people a remnant the saints described by Daniel (Dan. 7:21), and which we saw suffering under the beast in the thirteenth chapter of the Apocalypse? Their song, too, seems in harmony with the spirit of the remnant often brought before us in the psalms, as speaking of the judgment and power of God, which would subdue all nations to Himself. This song is, in principle, much like the song of Moses in the book of Exodus. They say,

Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of nations! [Margin.]
Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name; for
Thou only art holy: for *all nations* shall come and worship
before Thee; for *Thy judgments* are made manifest
{Rev. 15:3, 4}.

The difference between this utterance and the new song of the fifth chapter is most striking, so that it is impossible to identify them. The whole company stands before us as another witness of the faithfulness of God to those who, in any dispensation, make God and the Lamb their refuge, and thus find shelter from impending wrath. The 20th chapter shows us that those who thus get the victory over the beast and his image are in the first resurrection (Rev. 4, 5) Before closing our remarks on this portion, it may be well to say that the marginal reading,

king of nations,

is preferable to

king of saints,

because the Scripture nowhere teaches that Christ stands to *us* in the relationship of king. It is true that He is Lord of all; but our hope is to share His throne with Him, instead of being reigned over by Him as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

The Seven Vials

After this, the seer looked, and,

behold the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven
was opened {Rev. 15:5},

and the whole scene is expressive of wrath coming out from the sanctuary of God. There is not a cheering ray. The whole temple is filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His *power*, and no one was able to enter into the temple; for the seven angels are charged with the seven last plagues, and are sent forth to execute on guilty man the wrath of God. How very solemn! Happy those who now, while the gospel is preached, heed the warning, and flee from the wrath to come, by taking refuge in the precious blood of the Son of God. The time will come when it will

be too late. With many, we fear, the hardening process is going on, and will increase till they deny the only Lord God, both as the Creator of the universe and Redeemer of His people. Praise God that the gospel of His grace is still preached, that the arms of pardoning mercy are still opened wide, and that God is the Savior and everlasting Friend and Father of all who believe on the Lord Jesus. Blessed be God, at this moment we can say --

“Great grace there is for sinners great,
Rich grace for those who’re poor,
Almighty grace to keep the weak;
Come ye, and test its power.

“Infinite grace for finite worms;
O Lord; how good Thou art
Unto poor sinners who are vile!
Sweet Jesus, take my heart!”

We should notice that one of the four living creatures is here seen again acting apart from the elders, and doing that which seems very unlike the business of sinners saved by grace, namely, giving the angels the vials of wrath to discharge on the men who had the mark of the beast. Our place is association *with Christ* in judgment. I am aware that some dear servants of the Lord have considered the living creatures to be the Church, but this does not seem to me capable of being established, for reasons assigned when considering the 4th and 5th chapters. But, as before observed, those who hold that the living creatures are the Church, are bound to admit that the saints are caught up to heaven before the great tribulation, because here we see one of the living creatures *in heaven* engaged in giving the angels vials of wrath to pour out on men, the worshipers of the beast and his image on earth.

One of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from His power: and no one was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled (Rev. 15:7, 8; see Rev. 16:2).

The First Vial

The solemn moment will come when the command will be given, and the vials be poured out. To the seven angels it will be said,

Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth (Rev. 16:1).

This series of judgments evidently begins after the beast has been fully manifested, and his image set up; for the first vial is poured out on those who are connected with the abomination of desolation.

The first went and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image (Rev. 16:2).

The Second Vial

In the outpouring of the vials, we do not find their effect limited to a third part, or a fourth part, as the trumpets and seals were; and the character of the judgments is not only more extensive, but

more severe. If the apocalyptic judgments have a special bearing on the nations where the light of the gospel and outward privileges have so abounded, now they are given up in a thoroughly apostate state to the wrath of God. The second vial is poured on the sea, bringing death on everything.

The second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea (Rev. 16:3).

The Third Vial

The rivers and fountains now become blood, and the angel of the waters acknowledges the just retribution of God upon men in thus executing judgment.

Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard [not another out of, but] the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments (Rev. 16:5-7).

How little do men think that God will act in retributive justice! How awful is the thought, that men, with all their boastful cries of “improvement” and “progress,” are hurrying on to the time of God’s anger! But so it is. He will yet arise, and require all the righteous blood that has been shed, and avenge His own elect. Again, we are forcibly reminded of the safety of those who are sheltered by the precious blood of Christ.

The Fourth Vial

Men are

burned [margin] with a great heat (Rev. 16:9 see also New Trans., JND),

and blaspheme the name of God. There is a remarkable similarity in the spheres of judgment in the first four trumpets and vials -- the earth, sea, rivers, fountains, and sun being smitten in each; the vials, as before noticed, being more extensive and severe. And as we saw in former judgments, so it is recorded now, that instead of these things leading men to repent, it brings out horrible blasphemy. How bad is the human heart! How oft should the believer’s cry to God be --

“Take Thou my heart, and let it be
For ever close to all but Thee!”

How strikingly in the apocalyptic judgments we see that terror and judgment harden instead of soften the human heart; so here again, in the midst of their sufferings,

they blasphemed the name of God, who hath power over these plagues, and they repented not to give Him glory (Rev. 16:9).

The Fifth Vial

This outpouring of God’s wrath is directed to the seat of the beast. As in the days of Pharaoh, the people suffered for some time, while the wicked king went free; so now those who worship the beast have the vengeance of God executed upon them, while the

judgment of the beast is postponed till the Lord Himself comes to cast him alive into the lake of fire. This will be a time of terror, suffering, and distress. The kingdom of the beast will be full of darkness, and men will gnaw their tongues for pain. Surely this very earth shall witness many at that time weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth. It would seem as if the darkness and torment of hell had overtaken men on earth, so terrible will be the outpoured wrath of God. But what effect will it have? Will these judgments break men's hearts, and subdue them to the living God? Ah, no! We are told here again, that

men blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds (Rev. 16:11).

The Sixth Vial

The first point noticed here is, that it is poured

upon the great river Euphrates, and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings [not of, but] which come from the east might be prepared {Rev. 15:12};

that is, that the present barrier to the kings of the east mingling with the western powers should be removed, and thus the great gathering of kings and people for their final overthrow might be accomplished. The river Euphrates, which formed the eastern boundary of the land of Canaan, is a deep and wide river, about 1500 miles in length, and in some places nearly a mile in breadth; so that we can easily see what a barrier it must be to persons wishing to cross it. This, however, is to be removed in God's time of wrath, and the spirit of gathering together and centralization, now so rapidly growing, will, with special help from Satan and his allies, speedily bring about the awful crisis.

John tells us that he saw

three unclean spirits like frogs {Rev. 16:13}

acting upon the kings of the earth, and the whole world -- the whole habitable world -- to gather them together to the great day of God Almighty. This power is Satanic. The unclean spirits come

out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet; for they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, etc. {Rev. 16:13, 14}

Like frogs silently lurk about in hidden places, unperceived, so are these; and they overcome by the miraculous signs and lying wonders which they accomplish and gather men to the great battle. It is said that

He gathered them together {see Rev. 16:14},

and in the 14th verse, they (the spirits of devils) gather them; that is, that though Satan and his allies be the instruments, it is to carry out God's purpose, so that it may be truly said that

He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon (Rev. 16:16).

Men little think what Satan is doing by the confederacies of the day. Is it possible that the fraternizing of nations, and the various minor associations among men, can be already the beginning of this great and awful gathering together? The question is, What is man's object now? Is it self or Christ? Satan is ever opposed to Christ, and acts on man's selfishness. The world, too, lieth in the wicked one. How solemn it is that the dragon (Satan), the beast,

and the false prophet, give birth to these three unclean spirits like frogs, and that they gather men together.

The Seventh Vial

This vial is poured into the air; then a voice out of heaven utters,

It is done (Rev. 16:17),

and many terrible things follow. The great city -- Babylon -- (see Rev. 14:8; 18:10) is divided into three parts. The cities of the nations fall. Great Babylon, too, now comes into remembrance before God, to receive the cup of the fierceness of His wrath. God shakes terribly the earth. Every island flees away, and the mountains are not found. A great hail falls upon men out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent; and here again we are told that men blasphemed God because of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great (Rev. 16:18-21).

As we saw in connection with the opening of the seventh seal, and sounding of the seventh trumpet, the temple of heaven brought before us, and voices and thunders and an earthquake, so now

there came a great voice out of the temple, . . . and there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great {Rev. 17:18}.

This, I believe, takes us to the time of the personal coming of the Lord Jesus in the clouds of heaven with great power and glory -- the great day of the wrath of the lamb.

Chapter 16:15: The Parenthesis Between the Sixth and Seventh Vials

It is remarkable that, as we noticed between the sixth and seventh seals, and the sixth and seventh trumpets, so between the sixth and seventh vials a parenthesis occurs. In this last, the Lord is announced as coming as a thief in judgment -- introducing the day of the Lord -- when we shall come out of heaven with Him. (See Rev. 19:11-14.) He says,

Behold, I come as a thief {Rev. 16:15}.

Christ will suddenly come upon this world as a thief.

The day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night
{1 Thess. 5:2}.

But we know that He will not come to *us* as a thief.

Ye, *brethren*, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief (1 Thess. 5:2, 4).

But while judgment is threatened, there seems also to be a gleam of mercy rejoicing against judgment (Rev. 16:15). It intimates that a remnant will be watching for the Messiah (and we gather from other Scriptures that such will be the case), and others are spoken of as having the shame of their nakedness made manifest.

Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame {Rev. 16:15}.

Chapters 17, 18: Babylon The Great

{Introduction}

The latter chapters of the Book of Revelation bring before us some remarkable instruction in the way of contrast. It seems as if the lines that Satan pursued, and the actings of God, were here put side by side to show the just judgment upon men, the crushing of Satan, and the establishment of the kingdom and glory of God.

We have previously noticed the devil's power of mimicry, his artful way of having something outwardly resembling what is of God, by which to accomplish his own evil purposes of dishonoring Christ and deceiving the world. These things are very manifest in the closing scenes of this marvelous book, and they help us much to understand things as they now are, as well as to perceive to what they are rapidly hastening.

In the 17th and 18th chapters we have a woman and a city symbolically set before us; and in the following chapters we have also a woman and a city. The one filthy and doomed to eternal destruction; the other holy and having the glory of God. How unspeakably wide the contrast! Both these scenes were shown to John by an angel, perhaps the same angel, as the description is much the same in both instances. (Compare Rev. 17:1, with Rev. 21:9.) In the one he saw

the great whore (Rev. 17:1),

in the other

the Bride, the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9).

To see the false and corrupt one, he had to go into the wilderness -- the place outside God's presence, her proper sphere; to behold the other, the Bride, "dressed in beauty not her own," he was carried into a great and high mountain, when he saw her descending out of heaven from God. But in both instances we are told that he was

in the Spirit {Rev. 17:3, 21:10}

in order to see these things. This is an important point to observe; for it teaches us that we need the Holy Ghost to perceive the workings and devices of Satan, as much as we do to discern the ways and purposes of God. How is it that many are in such ignorance of these things, and judge them matters of no importance? How is it that some persons, who are surrounded with corrupt Christianity, and often hear about the standing and glory of the co-heirs of Christ, yet never seem to perceive and grasp either of them as realities? Is it not because they are not shown them by the Holy Ghost? They may try to grasp them intellectually, and fail. Reason and argument are insufficient for apprehending spiritual mysteries. Babylon is called a

mystery {Rev. 17:5};

Christ and the Church

the mystery {see Eph. 5:32}.

Both are now revealed to us, and the revelations are to be received in all simplicity. For this, we need to be

in the Spirit.

These things were *shown* to John; the angel said,

Come hither; I will *shew* unto thee {Rev. 17:10}

Let us never forget that the Spirit of truth, who guides into all truth, takes of the things of Christ, and *shows* them unto us, and that it is by faith alone we receive God's revelation, whether we can understand it or not.

As we have said, Satan is an imitator, so that we have in the latter chapters of this book similarities as well as contrasts. God has a bride, Satan has a harlot. God's people are *seated* in the heavenlies, so we are repeatedly told that the woman *sitteth*; the former are raised up together, and made to *sit* together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: the latter *sits* upon the beast. The harlot is "arrayed" in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones and pearls: but to the bride was granted that she should be "arrayed" in fine linen, clean and white. The harlot holds a golden cup in her hand, to give drink to thirsty souls; but only to deceive and intoxicate -- to act upon the senses, having no power effectually to relieve a burdened heart and conscience. It is a bewitching cup. It is full of wine of fornication, making all drunk who take it, and hardens the heart toward Christ. It is brim full of wine of filthiness and abomination. But, thank God, there is another cup which souls may drink -- a cup of blessing, full of peace and consolation and joy for troubled, sin-sick souls; it is the cup of the Savior's blood, full of the love of God to sinners, which draws the heart *to* God, and keeps the heart *for* God.

The cup of blessing which we bless {1 Cor. 10:16}

cheers both God and man, fills the soul with joy and gladness, and restores the distrustful heart to happy confidence in God. It is the best wine, which makes the lips to speak (Cant. 7:9); it makes the whole soul to enter into the unutterable sorrows of Jesus on the cross, when

He poured out His soul unto death {see Isa. 53:12},

and separates the affections and desires *unto* God and Christ in the heavenlies, and therefore *from* this present evil world. It is

"The balm of life, the cure of woe,
The measure and the pledge of love;
The sinner's refuge here below,
The angels' theme in heaven above."

The harlot's cup can only gratify the fleshly appetite for a passing moment, and end in wailing and gnashing of teeth; it stands in widest contrast with the

living water {John 4:10; 7:38}

of the gospel, the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, which proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

The woman's heart and desires are gratified with the kings of this world; the inhabitants of the earth drink of her intoxicating cup; thus she receives a wide and popular patronage: but those who are with the Lamb are called (let us think of this) and chosen and faithful (Rev. 17:14). Oneness of mind may characterize those who are in league with the harlot, as one mind and one judgment should characterize God's children now; but her doom shall come, and she shall be utterly burned with fire, while the Bride shall shine in unutterable beauty and uncreated light. In pride and self-esteem, the harlot has long said,

I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow
{Rev. 18:7}

[while the saints are mourning the absence of their loving Lord]; yet her judgment and eternal abasement shall quickly come. And while the Church of God now knows tribulation and suffering and rejection for Christ's sake, the wicked woman prospers in riches, successful commerce, and abundance of delicacies; yet suddenly -- in one hour -- shall God's judgment overtake her. Her mirth then will for ever cease, her light be for ever extinguished, and her dainty and goodly things for ever depart from her. Her name is written in her forehead,

Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth {Rev. 17:5},

but is read only by those who are taught of God's Spirit. Alas! how unlike God's loved ones! of whom it is said,

They shall see His face, and *His name* shall be in their foreheads (Rev. 22:4).

We have already seen the fall of Babylon referred to both in the 14th and 16th chapters. In the 17th and 18th chapters we have details of her characteristics. She is presented under two symbols, a woman and a city, and they seem both needed; the one to show us her principles, the other the results of her harlotry. We see, in the following chapters, in the Bride and the city, the relationship of affection in which she stands to God and the Lamb, and her subsequent display in glory, having the glory of God.

Babylon means confusion -- the cunning union of things Divine and worldly; the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, trafficking with the things of God. It has therefore both a religious and civil aspect. It is the old sin of Cain, who, with a false religion, murdered his righteous brother, deliberately went out from the presence of God, and obtained a place of ease, luxury, and influence in the earth. We do violence to truth to limit Babylon to Romanism. It abounds in Protestantism, and in every thing and place where the name of Christ is used to sanction worldliness; or where the truth of revelation is used for worldly advancement, instead of for the glory of God. This is unfaithfulness to Christ; it is referred to by the apostle James when he says,

Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).

This is very solemn and searching, and it behoves us to see well to it that we are spiritual, and not carnal, cleaving to the Lord Himself with full purpose of heart, instead of to this present evil world. Paul was very watchful on this point in his care over the saints. He says,

I am jealous over you with godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Cor. 11:2, 3).

Babylon of the Apocalypse cannot be a literal city, because we are told that

in her was found the blood of *all* that were slain upon the earth (Rev. 18:24);

but it is religious corruption, which, like Babylon of old, often takes God's people captive. It is a widespread system: man in the flesh taking up and corrupting the things of God, making himself or the world the object, instead of God's glory; ensnaring the affections from God and Christ, and filling the mind with earthliness. It began very early in the world, and our Lord seemed to refer to it when He said to the Pharisees,

Behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city; that *upon you* may come *all the righteous blood shed upon the earth*, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar (Matt. 23:34, 35).

Oh, beloved in the Lord! let us watch against the spirit of Babylon which surrounds us on almost every hand, for it easily and plausibly insinuates itself. What harm is there, says one or another, in going here and there, and seeing this and that? Can we do it in obedience to our Lord? Is it not a temptation to take a sip out of the harlot's intoxicating cup? Let us feed upon Christ; for His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood drink indeed: this will strengthen our faith and love, and make us abhor instead of taste the harlot's cup.

"Redouble your precautions, O ye saints! --

Aware of the destroyer! Stop the gaps
Where, entering silently, he spoils the vines.

Be cautious! for your enemy is strong;

To sleepless malice adds perfected craft,

And spiteful certainty of shortening rule;

To know if ye are Christ's, your struggling souls

Resist a baffled and defeated foe.

'Take ye these foes,' who do contrive the woe

Of God's Jerusalem! Expose their craft!

Seize your keen weapons, servants of the Lord,

And sword in hand, yea, in your armour, build

Her walls and fences that are broken down;

The weakest is made *strong* who *cleaves to Christ*."

The former part of the seventeenth chapter gives us the principles of the false woman -- Babylon the Great; the latter part gives us the interpretation of the symbols.

She is seen sitting upon

many waters {Rev. 17:1}

upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads, and ten horns {Rev. 17:3}.

Her raiment is purple and scarlet colour, and she is decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls {Rev. 17:4}.

She holds in her hand a golden cup, brim full of abominations and filthiness. Abominations in the Old Testament often mean idolatries. (See Deut. 32:16; 1 Kings 11:5-7.) Her outward appearance is thus symbolized. Her character is, that she is drunken with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus. She plays the harlot with kings, and she has intoxicated the inhabitants of the earth with her wine. Thus is she both corrupt and corrupting. Mystery is written upon her forehead, and her name is,

The mother of harlots and abominations of the earth {Rev. 17:5}.

Her rest is in the world that crucified the Lord of glory. The nations are her support. Her repose is in the bosom of the people. Her evil heart knows no higher range than self-pleasing, walking before men, and the spirit of the world which is energized by Satan. Her display is in the very things which the Scripture enjoins modest women to refuse, namely,

gold, and pearls, and costly array {see 1 Tim. 2:9}.

Her great object is to corrupt others by her intoxicating wine. Her enmity to God is manifested by her thirst for the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus. Such are some of the characteristics of this unchaste woman; and let us never forget that the beloved apostle, at Patmos, needed to be

in the Spirit

to detect her corrupt character and ways, and so do we. The two evils of the flesh, corruption and violence, mentioned in Gen. 6:12, 13, are seen in full growth in the woman and the beast.

The explanation of the symbolic description of the woman, and of the beast which carrieth her, is brought before us in the eighth and following verses.

The Beast

The scarlet-coloured beast which carried the woman is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition. This shows its Satanic origin and hellish destiny. It has seven heads and ten horns, both without crowns, and may be easily identified with the beast of the thirteenth chapter, which we judge to be the Roman empire in its future resuscitated state.¹⁰ We are told also, that the beast was, and is not, and yet shall be; thus giving it a past and future, but not a present existence. And is not this exactly the fact with regard to the Roman empire? It has been in full energy, and for a long time it has not been known as an empire: but by and by the image of Daniel will be manifested in ten toes, or kingdoms, and the empire be revived -- only, be it remembered, under special Satanic energy;

it shall ascend out of the bottomless pit {Rev. 17:8}.

But while the beast may thus be recognized as the Roman empire, we must also regard the beast as headed up in a man who wields its entire power; for the beast is spoken of in both these aspects: and then

the false prophet {see Rev. 13:11-17}

will compel all to bow down and worship the beast, and to have his name in their foreheads or hands. Thus we are told again, what has been previously remarked, that this Son of perdition will be the object of a world-wide admiration. It is said that

they that dwell upon the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the Book of Life *from* the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and shall come again (see Rev. 17:8).

None are free from this delusion but those whose names are in the Book of Life. It may be well to observe here, in passing, that the Church is spoken of as chosen in Christ, not *from*, but *before* the foundation of the world. The saints who suffer under the beast will not be the Church -- the body of Christ; for, as we have repeatedly noticed, we shall have been caught up before these terrible days, to meet the Lord in the air; but they will be Jewish saints, and are spoken of as in connection with that which is *from* the foundation of the world.

Some have thought that the seven-hilled city is Rome, because we are told that

the seven heads upon which the woman sitteth are seven mountains {see Rev. 17:9};

others have gone so far as to state, that because of this, Babylon the Great must be Popery, as if this widespread system were limited to that terrible work. Rome, however, as the seven-hilled city, may be referred to, but we must not limit our view of these principles to Rome. And while Romanism is certainly a large example of Babylon, and most emphatically referred to here, we may be assured that Babylon the Great abounds also in Protestantism, or wherever the world's support is resorted to in connection with the name and work of the Lord. It is difficult almost to say where Babylon is not; for when we see the line of demarcation between the Church and the world so obliterated, and remember how perfectly distinct the teaching of our Lord and of His apostles was as to the opposite character of flesh and spirit, the world and the Church, we must conclude that Babel, or confusion, must be wherever the Lord is not wholly followed, His word fully obeyed, His Holy Spirit practically honored.

But is not the true explanation of these seven hills to be found in the neat verse? May we not regard the seven mountains, or heads, as seven potentates or forms of government; for mountains may be regarded as representative of power or authority, the woman finding her rest in those national authorities. But however this may be, we are distinctly told immediately after, that

they are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short time (see Rev. 17:10).

That the five kings are five potentates which had passed away before the apocalyptic visions were made known to John, that one was then in existence, and another was to appear, and continue for a short time, we should be ready enough to admit, for it is obvious; but here again we find this last potentate, whose duration

10. In Rev. 12 the beast's heads are crowned; in Rev. 13 the ten horns are crowned; and here neither heads nor horns are crowned.

is so brief, has been by some attributed to popery. But it seems unreasonable, that a system, which has existed for so many centuries should be understood to be that which only continues for

a short space,

or

a little time,

especially when this king is put in connection with five other kings which had passed away.

There is now a remarkable turn given to the description of the seven heads, for an eighth head springs up, which is said to be of the seven. It is the beast -- the Man of Sin, who impersonates the Roman empire, and in this description is identified with it. We are told,

The beast that was, and is not, he even is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition {Rev. 17:11}.

And further, we are informed that he, though springing out of the seven heads, and of course coming after them, will be in league with the ten horns, the kings of the resuscitated Roman empire, the ten kingdoms of Daniel, which are brought upon the scene by and by, but only to continue for a brief period. All that is revealed seems to show us the rapidity with which events follow each other as the day approaches.

The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast (Rev. 17:12).

These kings are all confederated together, fraternized, as some would say, and it is *for the beast* to help on the Satanic scheme of this Son of perdition. What an association! What a union! What a combination of human and Satanic energy! Ah! union and unity are common words in our day, and give impetus to principles of action on all sides; but we do well to ask the question, Is the proposed unity with Christ, or against Him? for He said,

He that is not with me is against me {Matt. 12:30, Luke 11:23}.

This is getting more and more manifest, and ere long every individual will have to take his stand either with Christ or against Him.

As to these kings, we are told,

These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast (Rev. 17:13).

The active energy of this confederacy of the beast and kings of the earth is purely against Christ, but, as we might expect, their unity and co-operation only end in their everlasting shame and destruction.

These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for He is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with Him are called, and chosen, and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

The last clause shows us that the Church is with Christ at that time; the words,

called, and chosen, and faithful,

are exactly those used by the apostle in addressing the Church of God.

We need to turn again to the book of Daniel to help us in the elucidation of the ten horns. The prophet saw a fourth beast,

diverse from all the beasts that were before it; *and it had ten horns*. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them *another little horn*. . . . In this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit. . . . I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. . . . I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that *the saints possessed the kingdom*. Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth; and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. *And the ten horns* out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and *another shall rise after them*. . . . And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom *under the whole heaven*, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him (Dan. 7:7-27).

Thus we see that the beast with ten horns, which Daniel saw, remarkably corresponds with the ten-horned beast of the Apocalypse, and the other little horn of Daniel which came up after them, with the eighth king of the Revelation. The saints, too, of Daniel -- first under the persecution of the great oppressor, and then, when God undertakes for them, brought into the blessing of the millennial kingdom, the hope of all true Israelites -- correspond with the saints of the book of Revelation. *They* get into their promised blessing of the kingdom with judgment (see Isa. 1:27); on the other hand, *we* enter our eternal and heavenly blessing by being caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

We are further told, that the kings and the beast will be confederated together against the woman. The many waters, on which we saw her sitting in the first verse, are

peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues (Rev. 17:15);

that is, the inhabitants of many countries. This is her rest at present; but, if I mistake not, it is already beginning to be disturbed, and they will soon shake her off. Would that it were for something better; but, alas! they prefer their own carnal liberty and self-will. Their minds will become changed towards her, and they will hate her. Thus nominal Christianity will end in open infidelity. Now most men are pleased with some sort of religion, but ere long they will find their liberty and pleasure only in open defiance of the living and true God. The judgment, however, of this woman, is of God. He makes the wrath of the wicked to execute His own counsels; for God will put it into their hearts to fulfil His will. This is very solemn. If the judgment of God came severely upon apostate Israel, how much more terrible shall the stroke be upon the apostate Church.

The ten horns which thou sawest, [not “upon,” but] and the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. For God hath put it in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree [or act with one mind], and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. (Rev. 17:16, 17).

Thus we see that this confederacy will hate the harlot, rob her of her riches, strip her of her costliness, deprive her of all she values, and eat her up, to advance the kingdom of the beast. All this God will accomplish, in His own time and way, for His own glory; and show that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God, and that He can take the wise in their own craftiness.

The Woman

The symbolic character of the woman is referred to in the last verse of this chapter, and it links us on with the following chapter, for she is called both a woman and a city. This shows how entirely symbolic the whole account is, and could not be understood to be a material city. She is described as having kingship over kings.

The woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth {Rev. 17:18}.

In the seventeenth chapter we saw the instrumentality employed by God in the judgment of Babylon the Great, but in the eighteenth chapter God alone appears as having taken vengeance upon this terrible abomination, which has both a religious and a civil, or rather a political aspect.

It is not the sin of adultery which is charged upon Babylon, but fornication. Israel was addressed by the prophet Jeremiah as married to Jehovah (Jer. 3:14); and Ezekiel says,

Thou hast not been an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; but as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband (Ezek. 16:31, 32).

But the Church is only espoused, having the marriage in anticipation; therefore the sin of those professing to be betrothed to the Son of God, who depart in heart and ways from Him for the hire of the seducer, is fornication, or harlotry. To confess Christ with the lip, while the affections and desires of the soul are going out after other objects, such as the pride, lust, and gain of this world, is the special sin here marked out. Happy those whose affections are so set upon Jesus as to be able to say in truth

He is all my salvation, and all my desire {see 2 Sam. 23:5}.

The 18th chapter opens by John telling us that he saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory, It was *another* angel, not the same angel that showed him the woman and the beast, and expounded the mysteries in the previous chapter. This latter angel makes a terrible announcement:

He cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, Babylon the Great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird (Rev. 18:2).

Such will be Babylon: utterly devilish and unclean, given up to Satan and his hosts, because nations, kings, and merchants, through her fleshly lusts, have gratified their desires in trafficking with her. *Nations* drank her intoxicating wine; the *kings* of the

earth found her willing embrace; and *merchant's* heaped up riches through her aid.

For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies (Rev. 18:3).

How easy it is for a man to call himself a Christian, and yet in heart and soul to be of the world! How ready is man to acknowledge God with his lips, while his heart is far from Him! But God must have realities. He will have His beloved Son honored. He is the God of judgment, and by Him actions are weighed. He searcheth the heart and trieth the reins of the children of men, and from Him no secrets are hid. How little, perhaps, do any of us think what is going on all around, through the harlot's intoxicating cup. The process may be a very gradual one in some cases; but the golden cup attracts the eye; the sparkling jewels and costly attire are strikingly alluring to the senses; and at last the bewitching cup is sipped. Its inebriating effects soon follow, and madly urge the soul to drink again the hellish mixture, which falsely promises both worlds, by utterly confusing law and gospel, Church and world, Christ and Belial. It is, indeed, a deadly poison, filling the mind with vain-glorious thoughts and self-inflated notions, while it hardens the heart against Christ, and sears the conscience as to the grace and truth of God. Hence deliberate overtures are made to the world for the sake of earthly gain and her perishing honors, and moth-eaten and corrupting treasures are most cordially embraced.

Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches (Psa. 73:12).

How different are the effects of drinking the cup of blessing of the precious blood of Christ! The more we drink of that cup, the more are we filled with the love of God, strengthened with might in the inner man, comforted and enlarged; we realize, too, the hollow and dissatisfying character of this guilty world, and our affections and longings of soul are drawn toward Christ, and God, and glory! While we drink of the cup of blessing, and contemplate the sorrows of the Son of God upon the tree, our very bowels are so moved toward our living, loving Jesus, that we cannot help exclaiming, --

“See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my heart, my life, my all.”

The testimony of this angel is followed by another voice out of heaven to God's people, for, as we have before seen, God will have a people in the earth at that time, whom He will sustain, and bring through the fiery trial, the

great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be (Matt. 24:21).

The voice says:

Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues (Rev. 18:4).

And if true, then, for saints having an earthly calling and hope, how far deeper the obligation of those who are one with a rejected Christ,

holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling {Heb. 3:1}.

Here seems to be the peculiarly solemn bearing of these chapters on us. The book, we know, is prefaced with the promise of blessing to those who read or hear it, and *keep* those things which are written therein. Nothing can be plainer than the path marked out for the members of the body of Christ, of separation from all the rapidly growing principles of Babylon the Great. It is high time to move onward, in obedience to our Lord Jesus. It is pleasant and interesting to consider the various details of prophetic truth which God has so mercifully revealed; but if they do not lead us to *action*, may we not fear lest the light that is in us be darkness? May the Lord help us! It is very solemn to stand in the bright light of the sure word of prophecy. There is such a thing as being partakers of others' sins, and we are warned concerning it by this voice from heaven. We dare not be neutral. Neither can we act as mere individuals, for we are members of one body -- the body of Christ. We either do or do not have fellowship with sins. The sins of this harlot are very black; they are heaping up, already piled very high, and will quickly reach unto heaven, and then God's judgment must come. Are we in any wise partakers of her sins? Have we fully come out of her? God says,

Come out.

Have we heard and obeyed this word of the Lord? Let us not forget that Jesus said,

He that hath *my commandments*, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. . . . If a man love me, he will keep *my words*; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. . . . He that loveth me not, keepeth not *my sayings* (John 14:21-24).

Let, us beloved, ponder the path of our feet. Let us search and see to what our hearts are attached. Is it really Christ we are serving? Are we giving Him His rightful place as our Lord, and acting worthy of His wondrous friendship? Are we minding earthly things? or are things above occupying our affections and desires? The iniquities of Babylon, so grievous in God's sight, are ripening for special judgment. Very soon it will be said,

God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double (Rev. 18:5, 6).

Self is Babylon's prevailing principle. How unlike the meek and lowly Jesus, who pleased not Himself, but could always say,

Not my will, but thine, be done {Luke 22:42}.

I do always those things which please Him {John 8:29}.

The Church of God, too, is spoken of as subject unto Christ; and true discipleship consists in denying self, taking up the cross, and following Christ. Babylon is not like this; -- self-love, self-seeking, self-reliance, and self-exaltation mark her, till her time of utter abasing come. Then it will be said,

How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her; for she said *in her*

heart [how searching!] I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. THEREFORE shall her plagues come in one day; death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her (Rev. 18:7, 8).

When God judges, He shows Himself to be the Searcher of the heart. He knows what is underneath many a burning lip, and is able to judge righteously. And in Babylon, where there was luxuriousness and extravagance, He brings

famine;

where the heart boastingly said,

I shall see no sorrow,

He brings

death;

and makes the one who in self-exaltation said,

I sit a queen, and am no widow,

to feel the bitterness of

mourning.

The suddenness, violence, and final character of the judgment are clearly pointed out. So sudden, that we are told

her plagues shall come in *one day* {Rev. 18:8}.

In one hour is thy judgment come {Rev. 18:10};

in one hour so great riches is come to nought {Rev. 18:17};

in one hour is she made desolate {Rev. 18:19}.

Like the other judgments, when men are saying,

Peace and safety {1 Thess. 5:3},

then sudden destruction cometh; or, as at Belshazzar's impious feast, while the thousand lords and princes were merry with wine, praising the gods of gold and silver, and filled with the excitement of the royal revelry, in *the same hour* came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote against the wall (Dan: 5:1-5).

The violence of Babylon's desolation and destruction is shown by a mighty angel, who

took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus *with violence* shall that great city Babylon be thrown down (Rev. 18:21).

Ah, when God's wrath is kindled it will be full of fury and fiery indignation, which shall devour His adversaries.

As to the final character of the judgment, this is many times alluded to in this chapter.

No man buyeth their merchandise *any more* {Rev. 18:11}.

The fruits that thy soul lusted after *are departed from thee*, and all things which were dainty and goodly *are departed from thee*, and thou shalt find them *no more at all* {Rev. 18:14}.

Babylon

shall be found *no more at all*. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard *no more at all in thee*; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found *any more in thee*; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard *no more at all in thee*; and the light of a candle shall shine *no more at all in thee*; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard *no more at all in thee* (Rev. 18:21-23).

We are elsewhere told, that

her smoke rose *up for ever and ever* (Rev. 19:3).

Such is the fearful and everlasting doom that awaits his false system. Let us now look at the persons who had fellowship with her iniquity, and therefore received of her plagues.

1. The kings of the earth weep and wail when they see the smoke of her burning. Their misery is great, when they think of that great city, that mighty city, and the abundance of her luxuries.

2. *The merchants of the earth* weep and lament also, because all their flourishing traffic is suddenly at an end.

The merchants . . . which were made rich by her stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping, and wailing, and saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! for in one hour so great riches is come to nought (Rev. 18:15-17).

3. *The shipmasters and sailors and traders by sea* weep too:

They cast dust upon their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! (Rev. 18:19).

Such are some of the distresses of those who are found associated with Babylon in that day. They seem, while on this earth, to be literally weeping and wailing and gnashing their teeth.

But we must not pass over the long list of merchandise that characterizes that great city. There are twenty-eight things enumerated, and they are arranged in seven classes. The first is a list of *ornaments*, --

gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls {Rev. 18:12}.

The second class is costly and showy attire, --

fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet {Rev. 18:12}.

The third class is *elegant and costly furniture*, --

all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner of most precious wood, and of brass, and of iron, and marble {see Rev. 18:12}.

The fourth class is *perfumery*, --

cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense {Rev. 18:13}.

The fifth class is *food*, --

wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep {Rev. 18:13}.

The sixth class, *splendid equipages*, --

horses and chariots {Rev. 18:13}.

The seventh class, men's *bodies and souls*, --

slaves, and souls of men {Rev. 18:13}.

It is evident that this catalogue presents what the lusts and pride of men in all nations most seek after. *Gold* stands at the head of the list, because that is of the most value in man's esteem, and *the souls of men* at the bottom of the list, because the soul is of the least importance in man's account. Do we not see here some of the real actings of nominal Christianity? Hence salvation is the last thing that is considered; but, with true believers, the soul stands

highest in the scale of importance, and the present possession of eternal life is the starting point.

We have purple and scarlet in this list, but no blue; for blue is typical of that which is heavenly, and according to God. The blue canopy over us tells us this; and we read that

the heavens declare the glory of God {Psa. 19:1}.

There is nothing of that which is above in Babylon; it is earthly, carnal, devilish, and its scarlet, like the colour of red earth, is in keeping with it.

But further. In the midst of all this misery on earth, at the desolating judgment of this harlot, the heart is relieved by the mind of heaven being introduced, and its warrant for rejoicing over it all (Rev. 18:20). The true rendering of the verse is,

Rejoice over her, heaven, and you saints, and apostles, and prophets; for God hath judged your judgment upon her.

This is an important point to notice. The order is the same as in Ephesians, -- apostles and prophets, and not prophets and apostles. Had it been the latter, there might be some doubt as to whether Old Testament prophets or New Testament prophets were meant. We see also that they are associated with saints exactly corresponding with those who are Christ's at His coming, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. The heavenly saints, therefore, are above, while Babylon's judgment is going on in the earth; and they rejoice, while those who have been associated with the harlot, instead of with the Son of God, are weeping and wailing. All this, as we know, takes place before the Lord comes out of heaven, in flaming fire, to judge the world in righteousness. It is a blessed feature in the apocalyptic writings, that when the soul is saddened at contemplating the visions of God's judicial vengeance, we are every now and then reminded that our place is above, on thrones with the Lamb. Even now, as risen and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, we can sing,

"He comes -- for oh! His yearning heart
No more can bear delay --
To scenes of full unmingled joy
To call His bride away.

This earth, the scene of all His woe,
A homeless wild to thee,
Full soon upon His heavenly throne
Its rightful King shall see.

Thou, too, shalt reign -- He will not wear
His crown of joy alone!
And earth His royal Bride shall see
Beside Him on His throne.

Then weep no more! 'tis all thine own --
His crown, His joy Divine;
And, greater far than all beside,
HE, HE HIMSELF is thine."

With all Babylon's greatness, revelry, and mirth, the awful conclusion of her description is, that

in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth (Rev. 18:24).

Does not this solemn account remind us of our Lord's warning to those who profess to be His servants, and yet find companionship with the enemies of the Lord?

But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 24:48-51).

Chapter 19 – 21:1-8: The Marriage of the Lamb, the Reign Of Christ, and the Eternal State

We had the joy in heaven alluded to in the previous chapter. It is not now joy in the presence of the angels of God over repenting sinners, but it is a time of heavenly rejoicing, because the great harlot is judged, and brought under God's everlasting wrath. Those who seek their rest in the world's religion, and look for earthly glory, will find their end to be bitterness and wailing. The Church's hope is the coming of the Son from heaven. We expect to partake of the glory of God and of the Lamb. We cannot rest till we see Him who is the object of our heart's joy. Our place here is to be rejected with Christ, to suffer for Him and with Him, knowing that we have infinitely better in Christ; and in a little while it will be seen that it is so. But the world is already judged, and is only waiting the execution of the sentence. Men are labouring busily to set this poor doomed world in order, but it is labouring in the very fire for vanity; for that setting in order is reserved for Jesus to accomplish by His personal appearing: for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet, and then the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Christians, too, may most perseveringly try to evangelize the world, in order to bring in a spiritual millennium, and court the world's help in furthering their endeavours, but it only produces confusion -- Babylon the Great, which is so soon to have the heavy judgment of God. The truth is, that the Church of God is perfectly distinct from the world. No two things can be more opposite. Many try to harmonize them, but the Scripture declares that all that is not of the Father is of the world.

It is, then, the judgment of the mystery of the great whore which is here accompanied with such rejoicing in heaven; and in the scene different companies are brought before us. We have --

1. *A great voice of much people in heaven*, and their song is,

Hallelujah! the salvation, and the glory, and the might belong to our God, because true and just are His judgments; for He hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Hallelujah! {see Rev. 19:1-3}.

This ascription of praise and glory to God was the utterance of much people in heaven.

2. Then the four-and-twenty elders and four living creatures *worship*. They do not, as I judge, thus worship God on the ground of redemption, for we have not hitherto seen any proof of the latter being redeemed; but they fall down and worship God as ascribing praise and honor to Him for His judgment of this unchaste woman; they, worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying,

Amen; Hallelujah {Rev. 19:4}!

Thus the saints, who, as we have before seen, have been previously caught up to meet the Lord in the air (or, according to the 20th verse of the last chapter, the saints, and the apostles, and prophets), prostrate themselves before Him that sat on the throne, and, like all others in heaven, give praise and glory to God. This is the last time "the elders" are named in the Apocalypse; for "the Bride," the Lamb's wife, now becomes distinctively owned.

3. *A voice from the throne* is then heard commanding *all* the servants to praise God; for although

much people {Rev. 19:1},

elders {Rev. 19:4},

and

living creatures {see Rev. 19:4},

had rendered praise and worship, it seems as if there are other occupants of the heavenlies at this time who have not done so. Therefore the Seer tells us that

a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, ALL ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great (Rev. 19:5).

The consequence is, that --

4. *A great multitude* respond to this command with an outburst of loudest praise, as if all intelligences of heaven joined in one song of joy. It is such a crash of heavenly rejoicing, that it is compared to the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings. All, all in heaven unite in one loud

Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth {Rev. 19:6}.

But let us not mistake the character of the praise. It is not that Christ reigns, but that

the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

The Lord Jesus will come forth as the King of kings, and Lord of lords; but here it is God reigneth. Neither is it a song of praise for the triumphs of grace through the death and resurrection of Christ; but it is praise for the righteous vengeance of God upon Babylon, the mother of harlots. It is not, therefore,

Worthy is the Lamb that was slain {Rev. 5:12},

but,

Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

What a difference this scene presents from the sorrow and trouble that many of the previous chapters have unfolded to us. This look into heaven is very happy and joyous. And I would here ask, Do not the opening verses of this chapter again plainly show that there are different companies in heaven? It seems to me impossible to

identify the various visions of redeemed ones that are brought before us in this book. Who could reasonably regard the elders of the fifth chapter as identical with the great multitude of the seventh chapter, though both ascribe all their salvation to the blood of the Lamb? for not only do the elders ask the question, who they are, and whence they came, but we get all the particulars of the throne and those surrounding it in both chapters, and in the seventh the great multitude is an *additional company*. Look also at the fifteenth chapter. There you have a redeemed people in no wise corresponding with the elders of the fifth chapter, or the great multitude of the seventh chapter; for they stand on a sea of glass, which was unoccupied in the fourth chapter, and their song of Moses tells us of their having been on Jewish ground. Again, the two witnesses that are seen in the eleventh chapter ascending up to heaven in a cloud in the sight of their enemies (Rev. 11:12), give a testimony that would be quite inconsistent for us who are members of the body of Christ, and called to suffer for Him, and to love our enemies as He did. (See Rev. 11:5.) And so in this nineteenth chapter, where the joy of heaven is opened to our spiritual intelligence, we have

much people,
elders, and living creatures,

and

a great multitude,

saying,

Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth
{Rev. 19:6}.

Thus we see the joy of heaven when God takes matters into His own hand. Now it is man's day. Evil prospers. Christ is still rejected by most. The world lieth in the wicked one; Satan is still its prince. True it is that God exercises His restraining power, pours down His providential blessings, and publishes and uses, in His great mercy, the gospel of His grace. But when God interferes as claiming subjection, and holding man accountable for his course, after His various warnings and witnesses have been unheeded, of course it can only be in terrible judgment. *Now*, blessed be God, Divine mercy lingers, and His wondrous long-suffering patience is lengthened out;

grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life {see
Rom. 5:21}.

Therefore, it would be quite out of character to say *now*, in a dispensational sense, that

the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

We who have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, know that we stand in grace before Him, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, we look forward to the time when God will take the things of earth into His own hand, and send Jesus to put all enemies under His feet.

There seems to be a fitting propriety in God judging the false woman before the marriage of the Lamb, and His coming forth in glory; for when He is manifested His Church will be with Him.

When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory {see Col. 3:4}.

Thus God justifies the title of those who rest on the blood of His Son, puts honors on Him who alone is worthy, and condemns those who have despised the gospel of His grace, and trodden under foot the blood of atonement.

The pretender -- the unchaste one who used the name of Christ for selfish purposes, and loved Him not -- being judicially set aside as the object of God's eternal indignation, the Lamb's wife is now for the first time introduced. She is the object of God's wondrous grace, and for ever united to the Lamb as partaker of His changeless love; and sharer of His honor and glory. Afterward she is manifested; for in the ages to come God will *show* the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7). We therefore find that the praise in heaven for the judgment of the great whore is immediately followed with shoutings of joy and gladness, because

the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready {Rev. 19:7}.

Hitherto the saints had known the joy of being with Christ around the throne of God; but now the Church is to have her distinctive place, the wife is to be presented. The Lord had spoken of a certain king, who made a marriage for his son; and now the time is come, and we are told that

His wife hath made herself ready.

"By which," said a much loved brother, now with the Lord, "I understand this, that the saints, or redeemed, have till now been in heaven, as children of the Father's house, but that now they are embodied to shine together in the glories of the golden city as the Lamb's wife (Rev. 21:9). He has now presented to Himself a glorious Church (Eph. 5). The saints are now ready to be manifested in the Son's kingdom, as they had till now been hidden in the Father's house."

There is reason to believe that the *bema*, or judgment-seat of Christ, of 2 Cor. 5:10, the place for manifesting saints and adjudicating rewards, will take place prior to this, because it seems as if Christ came forth in glory just after the marriage, and then we know we shall be manifested with Him. The next action after the marriage shows us the opened heaven, and the Lord's glorious appearing. But however this may be, it is well to notice that we are here reminded that all our blessings are not of works, but the sovereign actings of Divine grace from first to last. Her spotless beauty is a gift. Her fitness for the glory is all through rich mercy.

To her was *granted* that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright [margin]: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints: (Rev. 19:8).

Thus all is to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved. This the saint well knows, and therefore delights to sing, --

"When I stand before Thy throne,
Dressed in beauty not mine own;
When I see Thee as Thou art,
Love Thee with unsinning heart;
Then, Lord, shall I fully know --
Not till then -- how much I owe."

But this is not all. There are those who are *called* or bidden to the marriage, and they are blessed.

Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

Who can these be? Are they not guests? They seem very joyous, as if the marriage of the Lamb were connected with blessings to others; for they say,

Let *us* rejoice {see Rev. 19:7}.

But it is not they who speak of those who are called to the marriage, but another -- the angel perhaps who showed him these things. John says,

He saith to me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.

And to this is added,

These are the true sayings of God {Rev. 19:9}.

Now, as we have judged in our meditations on this wondrous book that the elders represent the heavenly saints -- all that are caught up to meet the Lord in the air at His coming -- and that in this 19th chapter those who compose the body, the Church, have their special place as the Lamb's wife, we can easily understand that there would be others there who might be guests at the marriage supper. They may, like John, be those who rejoice greatly, because of the Bridegroom's voice, and be *friends* of the Bridegroom rather than be the *Bride*. The Baptist said,

He that hath the Bride is the Bridegroom; but the *friend* of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled (John 3:29).

We should expect also from other Scriptures that the Church of the firstborn would be distinguished from other individual saints who lived prior to the formation of "the body." For instance, in Hebrews 11, after the apostle had recounted the blessed actings of many a true believer from Abel downwards, he tells us two things: 1st. That God has provided some *better* thing for us; and 2nd. That those who lived before us could not get into their state of perfection until we enter upon ours:

that they without us should not be made perfect {Heb. 11:40}.

In Hebrews 12, the apostle mentions more than one class of redeemed ones. Besides "the Church," we have just men.

We are spoken of as come

to the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the *spirits of just men made perfect* (Heb. 12:23).

It is remarkable that John should now fall down to worship the angel who had showed him these things; whether he thought it was Christ Himself, or he was overcome with the joy and the gladness, glory and brightness of the scene which he had been contemplating, we are not told; but the angel quickly forbids his idolatry, and assures him that he is but a servant, and that God is the true object of worship.

See thou do it not. I am thy fellowservant, and [a fellowservant] of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus. Worship God {Rev. 19:10}.

He does not say that he is a saint, but that, like the saints, he too is a servant of God.

The testimony of Jesus,

that is, the testimony which proceeds from Jesus, whether through me, or you, or the prophet, is the spirit of prophecy, or, as others read it,

the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.

This chapter is full of contrasts. Here are two women, two suppers, two armies, and two kings. The great whore stands in

contrast with the Lamb's wife, the supper of the great God with the marriage supper of the Lamb, the armies of heaven with the armies of the beast, and the beasts and kings of the earth with the King of kings, and Lord of lords.

John sees heaven opened. He had seen a door opened in heaven in the fourth chapter, and heard a voice calling him up to witness things in connection with the throne of God; but now the heaven is opened for the full display of the glory and power of the Lord Himself, and His hosts, in judgment upon living persons. The wrath of the Lamb is now really come. Every eye beholds Him coming in the clouds of heaven, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth wail because of Him. The period of God's dealing with the nations by providential judgments, and special outpourings of His wrath, brought no repentance, but called forth more thorough blasphemy and daring impiety; it is time, therefore, that Christ, the Lord of all, should assert His rights as Heir of all things, and the rightful Head of all principality and power, and that He should have those who have suffered with Him and for Him -- His joint-heirs -- with Him. The Lord is thus symbolized as sitting upon a white horse, the emblem of power in the earth, in the attitude of taking vengeance, and putting all enemies under His feet. It is a deep reality, and very, very awful. What solemnity of soul we should have when we give utterance to such lines as --

"Lo, He comes! from heaven descending,
Once for favoured sinners slain;
Thousand thousand saints attending,
Swell the triumph of His train!
Hallelujah!
Jesus comes, and comes to reign."

He is not now seen with visage marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; not now emptying Himself, and making Himself of no reputation; not now to be spit upon, or made sin and a curse for us, in being nailed to a tree; not now seen in ignominy, poverty, weakness, and desertion; but manifesting His own glory and power, asserting His own rights. As another has said, "He is here seen putting on all the glories He has acquired, and all the honors befitting such an occasion."

As to His titles, we may notice first of all that He is called

FAITHFUL AND TRUE {Rev. 19:11};

for He proved Himself emphatically to be the faithful witness, *always* doing those things which pleased God, and always faithful to man. He never failed. He alone could say,

I am the truth {John 14:6};

for He only was ever true to God, and true to all else. No other witness on earth than Jesus could be deservedly called

Faithful and True.

He was faithful and true in humiliation; He is now faithful and true as a great High Priest in heaven; and -- oh, how solemn! -- He will be faithful and true in judging the world in righteousness.

We find, too, that

He had A NAME WRITTEN WHICH NO MAN KNEW BUT HE HIMSELF {Rev. 19:12}.

What mortal could ever know the name of Him who was God manifested in the flesh? Who can conceive the name of Him whose love passeth knowledge? How can we, then, venture to express ourselves on that which we are told no man knows? But of this we

are assured, that He was glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; that it was given Him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, and to be Head of all principality and power; also, that all judgment is committed unto Him, because He is the Son of man. The children of Israel had to carry certain parts of the tabernacle which they dared not uncover; and we will not attempt to unravel what God has not revealed. Perhaps it is the most fruitful source of deadly error. It should be enough for us to be told, that

no man knoweth the Son, but the, Father (Matt. 11:27).

This mystery seems to refer to the divinity of Him who is thus brought before us, who

had a name written which no man knew but He Himself.

We are told also that His name is called

THE WORD OF GOD {Rev. 19:13}.

He is the embodiment of the written word. He could say,

Thy law is within my heart {Psa. 40:8}.

It is He who was in the beginning, that was with God and was God, by whom all things were made. The Word was made flesh, whose glory John beheld -- the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. It shows us His divine, eternal character, and His fitness for carrying out the purposes set forth in the Word of God.

He also bears

on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS {Rev. 19:16};

for He will be manifested as the only Potentate, to whom all powers, dominions, and authorities must be subject. Now His Lordship is denied; but then every knee must bow. Still the world's cry is,

We have no king but Cæsar {John 19:15};

but then it will be seen that all power is given unto Him, and that His dominion is universal and everlasting. In the judgment which ushers in His kingdom, as well as during His millennial reign, He will show that faithfulness, and truth, and universal supremacy belong to Him.

The Lord's aspect is one of judgment -- strict, righteous indignation according to the word of God. He will not then preach, pardon and salvation, and go into every city and village preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God as He once did, but, as we are solemnly reminded,

in *righteousness* He doth judge and make war {Rev. 19:11}.

Alas! who can stand when the Lord marks iniquity? Who can meet His angry frown? Who can escape His flaming eye? No creature can avoid His searching; nothing can be covered from His sight.

On His head were many crowns (diadems), (Rev. 19:12).

The stupendous work that He accomplished on the tree witnesses that He is worthy of all honor, and glory, might, majesty, and dominion. Man has failed in every responsibility, and corrupted everything with which he has been entrusted; but Jesus obeyed and honored God in every circumstance, and could truly say to His Father,

I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do {John 17:4}.

He shall yet then wear His many crowns, and all shall pay homage to Him. As King of Israel, King of nations, King over all the earth, King of kings, His worth and supremacy shall be manifested and acknowledged. While we anticipate this glorious display of Him who was once mocked with a crown of thorns, we can heartily unite with another in singing --

“Our longing eyes would fain behold
That bright and blessed brow,
Once wrung with bitterest anguish, wear
Its crowns of glory now.”

He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood (Rev. 19:13)

tells us of His treading the winepress of the wrath of God. How different is this scene to that of His being nailed to the tree, when all forsook Him, and He poured out His soul unto death; when He shed His blood for many, for the remission of sins. When He is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, His vengeance must fall on those who know not God, and obey not the gospel. The two-edged sword of His mouth must rebuke the nations, and His fiery indignation devour the adversaries.

The Lord will not be alone when He comes to exercise judicial power. We are told, that when He comes out of heaven,

the armies *which are in heaven* followed Him upon white horses {Rev. 19:14}.

This we should have expected from the Scriptures --

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that ye, shall judge angels? (1 Cor. 6:2, 3).

But there are other reasons why we consider that the armies which follow Christ out of heaven are saints.

1. The Lord's promises.

He that overcometh, and keepeth my works to the end, to Him will I give power over the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessel of a potter shall they be broken to shivers even as I received of my Father (Rev. 2:26, 27).

Again:

To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me *in my throne*, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne (Rev. 3:21).

The vision we are considering describes this very scene; for we are told that the Lord will smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron. (Rev. 19:15). It is the same scene, too, that is contemplated in the second Psalm, in connection with Christ as King in Zion, where Jehovah says,

Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash themn pieces like a potter's vessel (Psa. 2:8, 9).

From these Scriptures we expect the saints to be with Christ when He comes to judge.

2. It is positively stated, that

when Christ, who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory (Col. 3:4).

3. The armies which follow Christ out of heaven not only reign with Him in power and glory, as symbolized by their being on white horses, but are clothed in fine linen, white and clean, which in the eighth verse is said to be

the righteousness of saints (Rev. 19:8).

4. But if any doubt should remain on the mind, we find in Rev. 17:14, where the same scene is alluded to, that those who are with the Lamb,

the Lord of lords, and King of kings,

are

called, and chosen, and faithful (Rev. 17:14).

No one, I suppose, would doubt that the words, "called," "chosen," and "faithful" must apply to saints. We never read of angels as "called," though we doubt not that "mighty angels" will accompany the Lord on certain occasions. Whenever the circumstances are connected with *formal* judgment, then we have angels (Matt. 25:31). We know how often the word "called" is used in the epistles in reference to saints, and sometimes "chosen" and "faithful" also.

The supper of the great God {Rev. 19:17},

or, as most critics prefer, the great supper of God, is then brought before us. The fowls seem summoned in readiness to feed upon the carcasses as soon as the people are slain. An angel stands in the sun, the most central place for summoning the visitants of this great supper. It is very, appalling.

He cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great (Rev. 19:17, 18).

What a supper! How wide the contrast with the marriage supper of the Lamb! The prophet Ezekiel refers to it; and it is interesting to observe that, like other prophets, he shows us that Israel's blessing on the earth is preceded by judgment. He first tells us that the feathered fowl and beast of the field shall eat the flesh and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, and then adds,

I will set my glory among the heathen, . . . and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel . . . neither will I hide my face from them any more (Ezek. 39:17-29).

Our chapter then speaks of the great battle of Armageddon referred to before. The apostasy and wickedness of man have now culminated to the highest pitch of daring outrage against Christ. This is where the present denial of the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, will lead men. The beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, are confederated together to make war against the Lamb, and against His army. The result is as we might expect; the Lord consumes the wicked one with

the spirit of His mouth, and destroys him with the brightness of His coming {see 2 Thess. 2:8}.

The beast, and the false prophet who wrought miracles before him, fall under special judgment, and it is executed at once; both are cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone, so that they are there a thousand years before Satan. The remainder, that is, the kings of the earth and their armies, fall under the vengeance of the Lord -- they are slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse; then the great supper of God takes place, when all the fowls are filled with their flesh. This is a judgment of the Lord Jesus on living persons; their bodies will be raised again, with others who have died in their sins, at the close of the millennium. The treading

of the winepress may be the judgment of false professors. It is referred to in Rev. 14:18-20. But the judgment of the beast and false prophet seems not only summary, but final. It is not the judgment of the sheep and the goats of Matt. 25, which is one on living nations at the commencement of the millennium.

Thus we have seen the whole system of Babylon, the beast and false prophet, the kings in league with him, and their armies, judicially set aside; the next chapter shows us the binding of Satan, the reign of Christ, the first resurrection, and eventually the final judgment of Satan and the wicked dead.

How little do men think where they are rushing! What madness to pursue the course of this world, which ere long will have such a termination! How immense is the difference of being *with* Christ and *against* Him! Events are rapidly rolling on towards this awful crisis. Time flies, oh, how swiftly, and with what amazing speed circumstances are culminating towards this terrible climax! What spiritual mind can fail to perceive the present practical denial of the Lordship of Jesus, the wide-spread spirit of insubordination, the ready way which men have of accounting for almost everything, as if there were no God, the popularity of the confederating principle, the almost universal effort to exalt man, the rapid increase of Christless religion, and all, too, connected with vast worldly prosperity and advancement! Thus the eyes of many are blinded to the precipice they are eagerly rushing over, and souls are insensible to the fiery indignation and vengeance so soon coming. Blessed are they who have to do with Christ Himself, who know what it is to commit the keeping of their souls to Him who died on the Cross to save sinners, but is now on the right hand of God. We cannot too often testify to those around us that the Savior of sinners is a person -- the Son of God;

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

"Thou precious Lamb of God,
We do believe Thy love;
We rest upon Thy word,
And hope to reign above
In realms of never-ending bliss --
With Thee, our perfect righteousness."

Satan, who had been thrust out of heavenly places in the 12th chapter, and who had come down and given his mighty energy to the beast and false prophet, is now chained and imprisoned in the abyss for a thousand years. (Rev. 20:1, 2). An angel is the instrument used. John says,

I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed for a little season {Rev. 20:1-3}.

Satan will be then under restraint for a time, and what an immense difference this will make to the world. Now he is mighty in power. He is called the Dragon, because of his terrible power: Satan, because he is man's adversary: Devil, because he is the great accuser: and old Serpent, because he had been the seducer from the beginning. His power is very great, so that he is called the prince of this world, and is said to be going about as a roaring *lion*,

seeking whom he may devour. He is called the god of this world, and as such blinds the eyes of the children of men, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of God should shine unto them. He sows tares where the Lord's good seed springs up, and thus makes false professors. He is the accuser of the brethren, and deceiver of the whole world, the father of lies -- a liar and murderer from the beginning. He tempts the children of God, seeks to hinder their communion with the Father and the Son, and with one another, and endeavours to seduce from the simplicity of Christ; and to accomplish his purposes, transforms himself and his servants into angels of light. He is still the prince of the power of the air, has access into heavenly places, tries to hinder believers from coming to the mercy-seat by the blood of Jesus, and works in the children of disobedience.

These terrible ways of Satan are to be stopped, and this earth, prior to the eternal state, is to know the peaceful effect of the absence of this great enemy, and the presence and reign of Christ. All Christians are agreed that this time of universal blessedness will take place, but many are looking for its introduction by the gradual spread of the gospel, instead of by the Lord's judicial interference, taking out of His kingdom them that offend and do iniquity, and leaving a people on the earth for blessing. It need scarcely be noticed how important it is to gather from the Scriptures the Lord's mind on the subject, and how much it must necessarily affect our walk and service. If the Lord's coming be our true scriptural hope, and that the object of the gospel is not to convert the world, but to gather out an elect people both of Jews and Gentiles, until the

one new man {Eph. 2:15}

is complete, and those who are Christ's at His coming are caught up to meet Him in the air, how detached from the world, and how much in heaven must the soul be, that has this blessed hope in real exercise and power!

He that hath this hope in Him, purifieth himself even as He is pure {see 1 John 3:3}.

Thus the binding of Satan, and judgment of the living wicked, which we have been considering, usher in "the day of the Lord." Other parts of Scripture show there will be other judgments also at the Lord's appearing. In fact judgment, and terrible vengeance characterize it, though mercy accompanies it. The Old Testament Scriptures abound with prophetic announcements of "the day of the Lord"; but the coming of the Lord Jesus to receive us unto Himself -- to be caught up to meet him in the air, is a New Testament revelation.

By the word of the Lord {1 Thess. 4:15}

and

Behold, I shew you a *mystery* {1 Cor. 15:51},

tell us this. In the day of the Lord many events will take place, and some widely differing from each other.

The day of the Lord has got its morning, midday, and evening. The fearful judgments we have been considering occur in the *morning*. This is followed by the reign of peace. The Lord will then fulfil His promises to Israel, of arising upon them as the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings, and will number up His jewels, the remnant of the Jews that have been serving Him in a day of such fiery persecution. Israel shall then know Him whom they pierced to be their Savior and Deliverer; they shall be all taught of God, all righteous, a *nation* born at once, and shall

blossom and bud, and fill the face of the whole earth with fruit. Creation, too, shall be delivered from its present bondage of corruption, and universal homage shall be paid to Jesus the Lord; for as we saw in the fifth chapter, every creature in heaven, and in earth, and under the earth, will be saying,

Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever {Rev. 5:13};

or, according to the last Psalm, when everything that hath breath shall praise the Lord. Thus shall the day of the Lord have its *meridian* glory and brightness. We can scarcely conceive the immense results of Satan's being bound, and of Christ's presence, power, and glory. But immense as they will be, the dispensation will still be marked with imperfection. Sin will be there, though kept down by the rod of Christ's power. The marks of sin and curse will be there too, for

dust shall be the serpent's meat {Isa. 65:25}.

The perfect eternal condition will not take place till after the millennium. Yet the blessing will be very wonderful, for Christ shall be King over the whole earth. Satan will be bound, and the rule will be perfect: thus two evils fraught with misery to our race will be taken away: but man's heart will not be thoroughly subjected to Christ, thus there will be room for the temptation of Satan when he is let loose again. The Church, though associated with Christ in His reign and kingdom, is, properly speaking, always regarded as belonging to the heavenlies.

"Oh what a bright and blessed world
This groaning earth of ours shall be,
When from His throne the tempter hurled,
Shall leave it all, O Lord, to Thee.

"Come, Savior, then, o'er all below
Shine brightly from Thy throne above;
Bid heaven and earth Thy glory know,
And all creation feel Thy love.

"But brighter far that world above,
Where we as we are known shall know;
And, to the sweet embrace of love,
Reign o'er this ransomed earth below.

"O blessed Lord, with longing eyes
That blissful hour we long to see;
While every worm and leaf supplies
Proof of the curse, and calls for Thee."

But, alas! there are the dark shades of *evening* belonging to this day. Satan will be let loose, and many will be again deceived; and such bold rebellion against God will be manifested by man as shall bring down fiery wrath from heaven. Lastly, the wicked dead, and Satan, will receive their final sentence.

The effect of Satan's being loosed for a little season proves again the utterly bad condition of man, and that nothing short of being born again of God's Spirit can fit him for the enjoyment of God. Here are myriads of human beings, countless as the sand upon the sea shore, who have long known the Lord's rule and presence as King over all the earth, have outwardly enjoyed the blessedness of His reign, have beheld the pleasantness and wisdom of His ways, the brightness of His glory, and the peace of His government; but no sooner is temptation presented by Satan, than men hearken to his lie, and turn against God and His people. The "nations" which will then be on earth will welcome the devourer's

falsehood, refuse the truth of God, and go up against the camp of "the saints," and the beloved city; but God's fiery judgment from heaven will quickly devour them. This shows us what man is. Man had been tried in the presence of Christ in humiliation, and then he will be tried after having known the personal reign and glory of Christ, and will be again proved to be thoroughly bad. Like every other test, it shows that

the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; so that they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:7, 8}.

And that

except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God {John 3:5}.

The test again reminds us that nothing can endure that is not based on the blood of the Lamb, and that the blood is the foundation and security of all blessing, and the spring of all our joy and worship. How precious this should make Jesus to us!

"Thy name we bless, Lord Jesus
Thy name all names excelling;
How great Thy love,
All praise above,
Should every tongue be telling.

"Thy Father's loving-kindness
In giving Thee was shown us:
Now by Thy blood
Redeemed to God,
As children He doth own us."

Now let us turn to the more pleasant part of this vision. John saw thrones, and many who lived (or came to life), and they reigned with Christ. The reign extends over a thousand years. The first resurrection is defined. It is the only part of Scripture wherein the words

first resurrection {Rev. 20:5, 6}

are found. It is therefore very important that we should understand it. There are three companies of persons here included in the definition of first resurrection.

They are clustered together in the fourth verse. John says: --

1. I saw *thrones*, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them {Rev. 20:4}.

These seem to me to be the saints that had been caught up to meet the Lord at His coming. This view is supported by the fact, that the only redeemed company sitting on thrones in the Revelation are the heavenly saints symbolized by the four and twenty elders.

2. John saw

the *souls* of them that were *beheaded* for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God {Rev. 20:4}.

Now, I ask, can this company be any other than that described on the opening of the fifth seal? There we had

souls under the altar {see Rev. 6:9}

who were slain for the Word of God, and for the testimony which they held. They are evidently those of the Jewish remnant who go forth with the *gospel of the kingdom*, after the Church is gone, and in the first half of the week before the Man of Sin is fully developed.

3. John saw others: the next clause may be read,

And such as had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived [that is, lived again in resurrection] and reigned with Christ a thousand years {see Rev. 20:4}.

In this last company we have those in Rev. 13:15, who were put to death after the rising up of the beast, that is, after the midst of the week of Dan. 9:27, because they would not worship the image of the beast. Observe that each of these companies has previously been brought before us in the Apocalypse, that they follow in chronological order, and that one is off the scene before the other that follows is brought into existence. For instance, the first company on thrones are in heaven before those represented by the souls under the altar are put to death; and it is after these are slain that the abomination of desolation is set up, and consequently many martyred for not worshiping the beast. Again, it is very important to notice that *all* these companies are said to be the first resurrection.

After a short parenthetical sentence, we are plainly told

this is the first resurrection {Rev. 20:5}.

Here, then, we have a Scripture definition, and nothing can be more necessary, in seeking to understand the word of God, than accepting Scripture definitions. Many mistakes occur for lack of this. There is another remarkable definition in Ephesians 1. We are there told what the Church is; it is said to be

the body {Eph. 1:22, 23}

of Him who is ascended far above all heavens. We need not question, then, what the Church is, nor what the first resurrection is -- both are defined. Neither must we confound the two; for the first resurrection comprehends, as we have seen, more than the Church. The first resurrection is distributive. At the close of the reign of Christ, others will live again, or rise from the dead; for all that are in the graves must hear the voice of Jesus, and come forth; but the resurrection of damnation, as it is called, will not take place till the thousand years are completed.

The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years are finished (see Rev. 20:5).

But that there might be no question as to the eternal happiness and blessing of those who live and reign with Christ a thousand years, we are further told that those who have part in the first resurrection are blessed and holy {Rev. 20:6}; the second death, the lake of fire, which will operate eternally on the lost, hath *no power over them*; and not only have they the negative mercy of the everlasting deliverance from that, but the positive blessing of happy relationship to God -- *they shall* be priests of God and of Christ (Rev. 20:6). The devil receives his final judgment at the close of the thousand years. We are told that the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

Our destiny, then, is to be

for ever with the Lord {see 2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:17};

as Jesus said,

Where I am, there shall also my servant be {John 12:26}.

Our place now is one of suffering *with* and *for* Him -- sympathy with a rejected Christ. To have fellowship with Him in suffering now, and fellowship with Him in glory by-and-by, properly belong

to us who are members of His body. We should, then, be always bearing about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, knowing that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long”;

for yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.

“And though there intervene
Rough seas and stormy skies,
Faith will not suffer aught to screen
Thy glory from mine eyes.

“There shall all clouds depart,
The wilderness shall cease;
And sweetly shall each gladdened heart
Enjoy eternal peace.”

Nothing can be more plainly set forth than the difference between
the first resurrection
and the resurrection of

the rest of the dead {Rev. 20:5}

described in this chapter. The period of a thousand years intervenes between them. Those in the one live again and reign with Christ; the others rise not till the thousand years are completed, and are then judged

every man according to their works {Rev. 20:13};

so that every one who is not found written in the Book of Life is cast into the lake of fire. We must remember that death is never presented to us in Scripture as annihilation; for not only do men live again, body and soul, after the first death, but those who will be in the second death are described as tormented day and night for ages of ages. There is that existing principle in man which renders him capable of receiving

everlasting punishment {Matt. 25:46}.

Hence, we read not only of God being able to destroy both body and soul in hell, but oh, how solemn! that process of punishment is described as an

everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power {2 Thess. 1:9}.

The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are *not seen are eternal* {2 Cor. 4:18}.

And we may be assured that our Lord would not have mentioned five times, within the compass of a few verses, the dreadful miseries of hell-fire as the fire that never shall be quenched, and where their worm dieth not, if He had intended us to understand that death is annihilation, and that the punishment of sinners will be limited and temporal. (See Mark 9:43-48.)

Does not our Lord here, in speaking of the Gehenna, or hell-fire, refer to the valley of Hinnom, where the people burnt their children alive? ¹¹It is called also the valley of Tophet, from the fire-stove in which the children were burnt. This valley was the scene of those wicked sacrifices; and after Josiah's time it is commonly believed that the valley of Hinnom (Geennan, Greek) continued to be the place of abominable filthiness and pollution,

where offal and carcases and filthiness were burnt by fire, and worms were seen preying upon the unconsumed pieces. Is there not a contrast drawn by our Lord between these fires which *are* quenched, and the worms which *have* died, and the eternal condition

where their worm *dieth not*, and their fire is *not quenched* (Josh. 18:16; 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chron. 28:3; Jer. 7:31, 32; 19:5, 6; 32:35).

(See Parkhurst's Lexicon.)

It is worthy of remark, that the same word is used by our Lord, in Matt. 25, for “*everlasting* life,” and “*everlasting* punishment,” as is used for the King *eternal*, immortal, invisible, and only wise God. (1 Tim. 1:17). Note also, that this word translated “punishment,” is necessarily translated “torment” in 1 John 4:18, for

fear hath torment.

Happy those who, in child-like simplicity, consent to wholesome words, even to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We should not forget that man, at creation, was distinguished from every other being which God fashioned, not only in being made after the image of God, but also in receiving the breath of life, and thus he became emphatically a living being. We read that

the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground;

and it is added, that

God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7).

This distinguishes man from every other creature.

Nor can we find a single passage in Scripture which speaks of one general resurrection. We hesitate not to say, that the idea is entirely opposed to the word of God. The parable of the sheep and the goats, in Matt. 25, which is so often referred to in proof of it, if carefully examined, will not be found to contain any idea of resurrection at all. There is not a person there said to be raised from the dead. It is a judgment of

nations {Matt. 25:32}

on the earth by the Lord, when He sits on His throne as King, in relation to the testimony of “the gospel of the kingdom,” which will yet go forth by a remnant of Jews. There are, therefore, not only sheep and goats, but a third party, the King's

brethren {Matt. 25:40}.

The parable of the wheat and tares, and also of the good fish and bad, in Matt. 13, are also without any reference to the resurrection either of believers or of unbelievers. It is Christ, when He is revealed from heaven (though angels are occupied in the work), clearing the living wicked out of His kingdom by executing judgment upon them: severing the wicked from among the just, and establishing His kingdom in the earth. The prophet Malachi, in speaking of this time says, that He shall tread down the wicked, and arise as the Sun of righteousness, with healing in His wings, unto those who fear His name (Mal. 4:1-3). The people of Israel always get into their blessings through judgment.

The only passage I know, that appears to give the least colour to the thought of one general resurrection, is that found in the 12th chapter of Daniel.

At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a

11. Gehenna is the Greek for the Hebrew word *Ge*, a valley, and *Hinnom*, the name of the possessor -- the valley of Hinnom.

time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time *thy people shall be delivered*, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt, etc. (Dan. 12:1, 2).

But here note, --

1. That it is Daniel's people, the Jews, to which this prophecy refers:

Thy people {Dan. 12:1}

and

many of them {Dan. 12:1}.

2. That it is connected with the great "tribulation" -- the

time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation (Dan. 12:1)

-- which we know from 2 Thess. 2, Rev. 19, and other Scriptures, will precede the millennium; whereas the chapter before us positively states that the resurrection of

the dead, small and great {Rev. 20:12},

is not till *after* the reign of a thousand years.

3. We *have been delivered* from the wrath to come long ago by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; but Daniel's people have not yet been delivered. Christ will close the great tribulation by coming as their Deliverer, and judging the wicked --

Thy people shall be delivered {Dan. 12:1}. (See also Rom. 11:26.)

This passage in Daniel may not refer to the literal resurrection of the body at all; but if it did, the scene occurring before the millennium, cannot refer to the judgment of the great white throne, which is after the millennium. It is most probably a political resurrection of many of the Jewish people hidden among the nations. They will have a new existence, and in that state some will awake to everlasting life, and some to shame. Isaiah seems to refer to the resuscitation of Israel in language something like the prophet Daniel. He says,

Thy dead shall live: my dead body [or carcase, that is, Israel in her spiritual deadness, called by Jehovah "my dead body,"] shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead (Isa. 26:19).

To show that it is connected with a time of vengeance on others, the prophet adds,

Come, *my people*, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh *out of His place* to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity [Are not these the living wicked?]: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain (Isa. 26:20, 21).

Ezekiel speaks of the future resurrection and restoration of Israel in the well-known vision of dry bones (Ezek. 37:12).

But suppose we could not answer every question that may be proposed in favour of one general resurrection, we have positive teaching in Scripture of the reverse, and it is always happy to get upon the ground of positive and revealed truth.

1. Our Lord Himself spoke of

the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14).

as the time of reward to His disciples.

2. He spoke of some being *accounted worthy to obtain* the resurrection *from* the dead (Luke 20:35). Mark,

from the dead

-- from among the dead ones. The idea of resurrection *of* the dead was not a difficulty with our Lord's disciples; but when our Lord spoke of rising *from* the dead, they questioned one another what the rising *from* the dead should mean (Mark 9:9, 10). Our Lord's was a resurrection *from* the dead. The prescribed order of resurrection is, first,

Christ the firstfruits;

next,

they that are Christ's at His coming {1 Cor. 15:23};

then cometh the end, etc.

3. Jesus also spoke of a resurrection of life, and a resurrection of judgment (John 5:29).

4. The apostle Paul sets the truth of the resurrection of those in Christ before the sorrowing Thessalonian believers for their comfort (1 Thess. 4:16-18).

5. In this twentieth of Revelation we have,

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the *first resurrection* {Rev. 20:6},

and the resurrection of the dead, small and great, not till a thousand years afterwards.

We might make other quotations in proof of the different orders of resurrection, but enough, we trust, has been produced to refute the popular thought of there being only one general resurrection. It is the resurrection of damnation, or judgment, that we are now about to consider, which, if I mistake not, consists of those only who have died without Christ. Jesus said,

He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [or judgment] (John 5:24).

Those, therefore, who are in the resurrection of damnation or judgment, are not only persons who have actually died, but who are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins.

At the close of the millennium, the present earth and heaven *flee away* before the great White Throne, and Him that sat on it. This is an important point, because it proves that the Lord coming in the clouds of heaven, when every eye shall see Him, when Israel, and all the tribes of the earth, will mourn because of Him, cannot be at this time, but must be pre-millennial, because *Israel's restoration* and the *earth's blessing* follow the judgments then executed upon the living. The time we are contemplating, of the great White Throne, seems connected with the created heaven and earth passing away, as if it were to make room for this great Throne and great judgment. Not a word, therefore, is here put forth about *the Lord's coming*, but about One sitting upon a great White Throne. It is not the throne of grace which we now know, nor the throne of peace which the millennial glory will know, but it is the throne of final and eternal judgment; and although myriads may be brought before it, there shall not be a single case that will not have its special investigation; for we are told that John saw in the vision, that

they were judged *every man*, according to their works {Rev. 20:13}.

The throne is described as “white” to show its infinite holiness and unsullied purity; and the awful extent and eternal importance of the business it will transact are enough to show why it is called “great.” The class judged are

the dead, small and great {Rev. 20:12},

and the character of the judgment is according to their works. The Lord Jesus is, doubtless, the Judge; for while we know that God is Judge of all, we are further told that the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. From His face the heaven and the earth flee away. His Church will not be before the throne to be judged; for she has already been reigning with Christ a thousand years, and the judgment of her sin and guilt the Savior bore for her in matchless grace upon the cross. This judgment will be but a continuance of the regal power and authority of Christ; for He will reign till He hath put down all authority and power; and the last enemy which shall be destroyed is death. We expect, therefore, to be associated with Christ, sitting on His throne with Him in this concluding part of His reign and execution of His mighty power (see 1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 3:21); It is, I say, a judgment of men according to works -- a final judgment of sinners. They had died Christless, and now they must render an account to Him who is able to judge righteously. And who can stand such a process?

If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand {Psa. 130:3}?

The hidden things are now made manifest, and the secrets of men’s hearts judged by Him from whom no secrets are hid.

The small and great stand before God {Rev. 20:12}.

Wherever their bodies had been, they can be detained no longer. The sea, which has long swallowed up in its liquid grave multitudes of the human family, is made to give up every one of its dead. Death -- whether the corrupted elements of its many victims lie either in the trackless desert, the Alpine snows, the pathless forest, the unfrequented valley, or elsewhere -- is made to deliver up each one of Adam’s family that its chilly hand had seized. And Hades, -- the place of departed spirits, too, must now own that Jesus is the only Potentate and Lord of the dead as well as of the living, and yield up every soul of man. There can be no possibility of escape. Almighty power commands; the omniscient eye of God sees that not one is wanting. He, from whose presence none can flee, and no place exclude His search, ranges all the dead, small and great, from Cain down to the last link in the chain of sinners, before Himself. Those who once despised Jesus, and set at naught the glorious testimony to the priceless value of His all-cleansing blood, now see Him with His wounded hands and feet as their Judge. Those who prided themselves on their own imaginary goodness, and sought to cover their nakedness with the fig-leaf apron of self-righteousness, now find its thorough failure to hide the leprous spots of a foul and fallen nature before the Lord. Ah! who can stand before God to be judged according to his works? What can satisfy God’s eye, but that which is based on the sin-atonement efficacy of the precious blood of Christ?

The character of the judgment is detailed, and so just and pure and perfect will it be, that not a soul shall be ever able to complain; every conscience shall be so convicted, and every case so thoroughly weighed in the balance of truth and justice, that all shall be speechless, and hang down their heads in unutterable

remorse and despair at the just sentence of the Judge, which shall silence every tongue, and bring everlasting glory to the power and faithfulness of God.

The *books* were opened {Rev. 20:12}.

This is more than one book -- what books can they be? We read of *a book of remembrance*. What could this be for, but to convict those standing at the bar of Divine justice? for God needs not to be reminded of anything -- *all* things are naked and open to the eyes of Him. A man will then read at a glance the whole history of himself. God will set his sins in order before his eyes; his secret sins in the light of his countenance. It will be a dark, black catalogue, without one good thing to shed a ray of brightness on the dismal page; for

they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8}.

The Bible will doubtless be “opened” too, as another witness; for, according to the Scripture,

in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established {Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1}.

The Savior said,

The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

Those who knew nothing of the stern requirements of the law, or the shadowy testimony of oft-repeated ritualism and sacrifice, will find that

as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law (Rom. 2:12);

and that the laws of nature, and the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are so clearly seen, and the eternal power and Godhead of the Creator understood, that they are without excuse; and it shall be proved that they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, etc., and

changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen (Rom. 1:25).

Others will be there who had long, more or less, boasted that they were Moses’ disciples, but were lawbreakers; and it is written, that

as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law (Rom. 2:12);

this is another Bible testimony. And who can possibly escape the condemnation of this witness, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ? for

by the law is the knowledge of sin {Rom. 3:20}.

Instead of the law of Moses giving any shelter to a Christless soul, it has always been the ministration of condemnation and death.

Now we know,

says the apostle Paul,

that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become *guilty before God*. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified *in His sight* (Rom. 3:19, 20).

Again, we are told, that

as many as are of the works of the law are *under the curse* (Gal. 3:10).

What madness and folly it is for men to take refuge in law-keeping, or any deeds of the flesh, for justification before God! The very thing that many are vainly hoping in, as giving them superiority over some of their neighbours, is that which justly proves their guilt and condemnation; in fact, the religion to which they so tenaciously cling is the death-warrant of their eternal perdition. But others will be there who have called themselves Christians, or at least have come under the gospel's joyful sound. The Bible is a witness to them. Its many warning voices against a name to live while being spiritually dead, the judgments threatened on mere professors, or those who had no love of the truth, and obeyed not the gospel; the Savior's oft-repeated testimony against Pharisaic hypocrisy; the sound of alarm against "tares," "foolish virgins," and all others who received not that blessed Savior, who is alone the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the oft-repeated testimony of the inspired page, of the impossibility of the unrighteous entering into the kingdom of heaven; and of any escaping who neglect so great salvation; and such terrible declarations as,

He that hath not the Son of God hath not life, but the wrath of God abideth on him {see John 3:36},

and

He that believeth not shall be damned {Mark 16:16};

most justly settle the eternal doom of those who acknowledge but obey not the Holy Scripture.

But there will be another book opened --

the book of life {Rev. 20:12}

-- another swift and solemn witness against the Christless part of the human race. It seems opened to show that their names are not there. It is a balance by which they are weighed, and

found wanting {Dan. 5:27}.

It is the book of Divine sovereign grace, in which they had no interest. It is a final test: for

whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:15).

Though great and *small* are in this judgment, the fact of each being judged according to their works prohibits the thought of *infants* being here. In time of old, Jehovah said by Moses,

Your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and unto them will I give it, and they shall possess it. (Deut. 1: 39).

But further. Death and Hades must be dealt with judicially too. Some one has said that "Heaven and earth will pass away but to be revived; but Death and Hades never." Christ has power over death; and after Satan is cast into the lake of fire, death has to be judged, but of course after the wicked dead are raised. Then Christ asserts His rights, and Death and Hades are cast into the lake of fire, so that after this there will be no more death.

Can any triumph be more mighty in its operations, or more complete in its accomplishment? It is Christ subduing all things unto Himself. All must acknowledge that He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. He is Lord of all.

This is followed by the eternal state. We may read the first eight verses of the twenty-first chapter as completing the section which commenced with the judgment of the great whore in the

nineteenth chapter. The order is the same as we find in 1 Cor. 15, which tells us that

Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death; for He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted which did put all things under Him; and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that did put all things under Him, that God may be all in all {see 1 Cor. 15:25-28}.

Here we find in the Revelation, that the casting of Hades and *Death* into the lake of fire concludes the subjection of everything by the Lord unto Himself. The kingdom, therefore, must now be delivered up unto God, that God may be all in all.

The first heaven and earth having passed away, we have now a new heaven and a new earth. Peter tells us that the present heaven and earth are reserved unto fire, that the elements will melt with fervent heat, and that the earth and all things therein shall be burned up. He also tells us that this will take place in *the day of the Lord*. Other Scriptures show that it will be neither at the dawn nor the meridian of that day, but at the close of that day, or, as we have before seen, at the termination of the millennium. We further learn from the apostle Peter, that this eternal condition will be characterized by *righteousness dwelling*. Now, we have *righteousness preached* and imputed to them that believe, and righteousness suffers; in the millennium *righteousness will reign* --

in righteousness He doth judge and make war {Rev. 19:11};

but in the new heaven and new earth *righteousness will dwell*, for it is final and changeless in its character. John also informs us, that, after the destruction of the present heaven and earth there will be

no more sea {Rev. 21:1}.

In our present constitution, natural life could not be sustained on the earth without sea, and the broad ocean flowing between different countries often acts as a restraint upon man's evil passions, checking war and bloodshed. But then, sin and curse will no more be known.

John sees the holy city descending from God out of heaven. Though still prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, she is not presented in relation to the Lamb, as in the millennial state; for the kingdom is delivered up unto God. Still the bride is distinctive, as Ephesians tells us that it will be

throughout all ages (Eph. 3:21).

The Church may be the tabernacle in which God abides, manifesting His glory to us. We get no longer "nations," but "men"; for nations which owe their origin to sin, though they exist in the millennium, are no longer known after the Lord has destroyed the works of the devil, and subdued all things unto Himself. But man, whom God created upright, in His own image, and placed in the earth -- a creature with whom He could come down and hold converse, is, in the eternal state, to know God coming down to dwell with them:

For they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God (Rev. 21:3).

Death, as we have seen, being cast into the lake of fire, is taken away for ever; so that we are told,

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more *death*, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away (Rev. 21:4).

It is quite clear that this is post-millennial, because in that dispensation we are told that a sinner a hundred years old shall be *accursed*, and the child shall *die* a hundred years old. (Isa. 65:20). This great change in the eternal state is accounted for in the next verse by a voice from the throne, saying,

Behold, I make *all things new* {Rev. 21:5}.

The seer is commanded to write that these words are true and faithful; and they come to us attested by Him who is the

Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End {Rev. 21:6}.

The description of this state concludes with two thoughts in widest contrast, but running side by side -- namely, the eternal happiness of the saved, and the eternal misery of the lost. The former inherit all things, drink freely of the fountain of the water of life, and stand in love before God as His sons. The latter, consisting of the fearful and unbelieving, the abominable, etc., have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev. 21:8). Thus, after the passing away of the present heaven and earth, and the judgment of the great White Throne, we are permitted to look at the saved in their eternal inheritance of full, unmingled blessing, and the eternal misery and torment of the wicked and unbelieving.

Moreover, let us not forget that the distinction is still preserved, as it has been all through Scripture, between the heaven and the earth.

The Church is always seen in connection with heaven. Her calling, standing, and eternal destiny are heavenly. She is made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ,

that in *the ages to come* He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6, 7).

And she is seen here again, coming down from God out of heaven.

But Israel's calling, blessings, and destinies are earthly; and, as it seems, for ever. How, when the earth is being burned up, that people will be preserved, and brought into the new earth, I know not; but it appears that they will have a place in the new earth:

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain (Isa. 66:22).

The people of Israel and their name are, therefore, to be as enduring as the new heaven and earth. This is deeply interesting, and if in that perpetual state of blessing *the land* shall be specially marked out, and the place where our Lord was crucified had in everlasting remembrance, it is no more than we should expect, that an act so stupendous, and connected with such everlasting results, should be recognised in the new earth. Scripture seems to favour the thought; for God made covenant with Abraham, and His *oath* unto Isaac, and confirmed the same unto Jacob by a law, and to Israel for an *everlasting* covenant, saying,

Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan (Psa. 105:9-11);

and Isaiah says,

They shall inherit the land for ever (Isa. 60:21).

It is also an interesting question, whether the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God or the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:21), can have its full accomplishment in the millennium?

How blessed it is to see all things subdued by Christ, and brought under the power of God! Celestial glory and terrestrial glory preserving each its separate qualities, and yet both to the praise and glory of God, and such as He can rest and delight in. Death destroyed, curse no more known, and every creature, whether in the new earth or in the new heaven, realizing the presence and blessing of God, who is all in all.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen {Rom. 11:33-36}.

Chapter 21:9 to 22:6: The Bride, the Lamb's Wife

We now come to the last section of this solemn Book. As in former instances, so now, the seer is led back again, for he is to learn the position and glory of the Church in the millennial age.

I here repeat what was mentioned when considering the seventeenth chapter, that it appears as if the same angel that showed to John the mystery of THE GREAT WHORE, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, now, in widest possible contrast, points to THE BRIDE, THE LAMB'S WIFE. To see the former, he was led into the wilderness; for the latter he had to look up towards heaven. Both needed the power of the Spirit to be discerned. As *the harlot* was likened to a city, so is *the bride*. The false thing was symbolised by a city which reigneth over the kings of the earth; the bride of the Lamb is also called that great city. We need not the Holy Ghost to see literal cities: the natural vision is enough for that. The things of God are discerned only by the Spirit of God. The book of Revelation abundantly teaches us this.

The heavenly calling and standing of the Church of God is often noticed in the epistles of the great apostle of the Gentiles. Even now we are spoken of as

partakers of the *heavenly* calling {Heb. 3:1},

as quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together *in heavenly places* in Christ Jesus; in the eternal state, we saw the bride coming down from God *out of heaven*; and in connection with millennial glory, John saw,

that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending *out of heaven* from God {Rev. 21:10}.

If Jerusalem means, as is generally considered, "a dwelling in peace," we can easily understand why the bride is so called. Securely fixed upon the peacemaking, peace-speaking power of the blood of Jesus, she knows now the full enjoyment of

peace with God {Rom. 5:1},

and

the peace of God {Phil. 4:7},

under the everlasting shelter of

the God of peace {Heb. 13:20, 21}.

Holy city {Rev. 21:10, {see New Trans., JND}}

becomes her, because holiness characterizes her, and no false or defiling thing can enter there (Rev. 21:27). She is

new Jerusalem {Rev. 3:12; 21:2},

because that city which should have been a dwelling of peace, a glory and praise in the earth, became spiritually Sodom and Egypt; They knew not the Prince of peace; they crucified the Lord of glory; they refused the gospel of peace, the forgiveness of sins; and rejected the testimony of the Holy Ghost. Hence that city, Jerusalem, could not be a dwelling of peace. No marvel, then, that we find the counsels of Divine grace teaching us about a *new*

Jerusalem. It is a *great* {rather, "holy"} *city*, because it comprehends all the members of the body of Christ. It comes *out of heaven*, because the saints, having previously been translated to the Father's house, are now manifested to the praise of the glory of Divine grace; then the world will know what they are so ignorant of now, that the Father hath loved us even as He loved Jesus. It comes

from God {Rev. 21:10},

because Christ died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God, and we have been made nigh to God in Christ Jesus, and by His blood. Christ Himself is our righteousness; our life is hid with Christ in God, and He has given us the glory which the Father gave Him; -- hence it is now noticed that John saw the bride,

having the glory of God, and her light like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal {Rev. 21:11}.

What wondrous heights of grace! and yet those heights were counselled in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, blessed with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Can we think, beloved, of anything higher or more blessed for any creature than this?

It may be asked by some, What proof have you that the bride, the Lamb's wife, is the Church? I give, in reply, the following reasons: --

1. The Church is taught to expect to be manifested to the world, that in the ages to come God *might show* the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to *us-ward* through Christ Jesus.

2. The twelve foundations, having in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb, seem to identify this city with one of the special characters of the Church, which, we are told in Ephesians, is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, that is, that they were the doctrinal founders of the Church.

3. It is evidently a symbolic and not a literal city, for the seer is not summoned to behold a city, but the bride, the Lamb's wife. He looks for *her*. In what imagery she would be presented in the vision he could not say; his soul was prepared by the angel for a vision of the Lamb's wife. It is clearly, then, a symbolic city. It is not even a city where the bride should dwell. He is called to see the bride, and he beholds her in the symbol of a city. In the contrast of the harlot, as before noticed, he also saw a symbolic city -- a city in which was found the blood of all that were slain on the earth -- a city which reigneth over the kings of the earth. How is it possible to apply such language literally? Besides, the dimensions of the golden city are given, and can we imagine a literal city coming down from God out of heaven 12,000 furlongs; or 1500 miles in *height*? We know, too, how symbolic language abounds in the book of Revelation.

4. When the Lord presents Himself to the assemblies as *the bright and Morning Star*, we are immediately told that

the Spirit and the bride say, Come {Rev. 22:17},

Now I ask, Can such a posture of soul be ascribed to any but the Church of God? To whom else has He been revealed as the bright and Morning Star? and who else has had, or ever will have, such a hope? The Jewish remnant will by-and-by long for Messiah to come, to bring them into their inheritance and kingdom, but they will know Him as the Sun of righteousness, bringing healing to Israel, and trampling their enemies in His fury; they will cry to God to send down vengeance on those around them, as many of the Psalms teach us. But the bride not only deeply longs in ardent affection for the Lord Himself,

the bright and Morning Star (Rev. 22:16)

which comes *before* sunrise, but she throws her arms wide open, in the spirit of the Savior of sinners, and cries to the Christless and godless around her, saying

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Let the reader attentively consider whether with these facts it is possible to think of the bride being any other than the Church of God!

5. The calling and expectation of the Church is that of eternal union with Christ. Christ is said to make in Himself of twain

one new man {Eph. 2:15}

-- He the Head and we the members; so that we are even now members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones {Eph. 5:30}.

We are told that

Christ . . . loved the Church, and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself *a glorious Church*, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but *nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church*. . . . This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:25, 27-29, 32).

Would not such a Scripture lead us to expect that the Church of God would have a distinct character as the bride, the Lamb's wife?

6. The gold and precious stones that abound in this city are figures used by the Holy Ghost to symbolise true saints on a former occasion. In 1 Cor. 3, when building upon the foundation laid, which is Jesus Christ, is considered, the apostle warns labourers in the gospel against accrediting persons as on that blessed foundation who are merely of the earth earthy, and not partakers of eternal life, not born from above; only wood, hay, and stubble, instead of being heavenly and divine -- gold, silver, and precious stones. Thus we are not surprised to find this holy city, new Jerusalem, of pure gold, like unto clear glass; and the foundations of the wall garnished with all manner of precious stones (Rev. 21:18, 19).

Are not these reasons sufficient for our concluding that the Church and bride are identical? We know that all the saints who are in the first resurrection will be in the reign with Christ in millennial glory, though that is not contemplated here, because the subject is specially the bride, the Lamb's wife.

It is a city of life and light and glory. As another has said, "The Church, as the candlestick, may be shattered; but as the Lamb's wife she shall live; and this golden city is the Bride of the Lamb, the Church of God now manifested in her perfectness. . . . She is the habitation of the glory of God, the place of the throne, a sanctuary, too, as well as a palace, having a presence within her which makes the whole scene a temple. Thus is she the suited dwelling-place of *kings and priests*; and being thus in herself the beautiful one, and bearing with her this honor of the royal priesthood, all that goes forth from her, or enters into her, or dwells there, is according to these things. *Light* is shed from her, that the nations may walk therein: *water* from the river of life flows from her, bearing *leaves* with it, that the nations may be healed thereby; and all that goes in is purity; and all who *dwell* within are in joy and dignity, having no need of candle, nor even light of the sun, being also in the conscious dignity of their everlasting kingdom; and nothing must *touch* such a habitation of holiness and gladness and glory, but the very honor of the kings of the earth. They may bring up their *glory and honor* unto it, but nothing less than that can approach it."

The kingdom is here displayed in its holy order and righteous authority. It is the *golden city* we get, the symbol of *righteousness* and *power* united in government -- the Church, with the enthroned Lamb descending out of heaven to take association with the earth, ruling it and yet blessing it, presiding over it in righteousness, and yet dispensing to it the water of life, and the light of the glory, of the very fountains of which she had now become the scene and the dwelling-place."

"Fair distant land, could now our eyes
But half its charms explore,
How would our spirits long to rise,
And dwell on earth no more!"

The jasper *wall*, great and high, tells us not only of glory and beauty in keeping with every other part of the city, but also of security and separation; and if of the earthly city it will be said,

Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces {Psa. 122:7},

how much more will this heavenly city be the place of endless peace and unchanging blessing? There is something Divine, something consistent with the glory of God, in the symbol of the jasper wall; for we find, in the vision of the presence of God on the throne in the fourth chapter, that the One who sat upon the throne was like a jasper and a sardine stone.

The *twelve foundations* show its perfect stability: perfect, I say, for it was also twelve times twelve, or a hundred and forty-four cubits high. But it is human, and not Divine, perfection; for it was according to man's measure, that is, the angel's. (Rev. 21:17). We find twelve frequently used as a symbol of perfection in human affairs. We have twelve hours in a day, twelve months in a year, twelve tribes of Israel. This city, too, is remarkably made up of twelves; it has twelve foundations, twelve gates, twelve angels. Whichever way it is measured, its length, breadth, and height are each twelve thousand furlongs. The shape of the city, therefore, is a cube. This shows it is perfect, that there is no inequality, nothing wanting. The *street* (not streets) of the city, emblem of the place of traffic and walk, which on earth is always the place of defilement, is here characterized by perfect purity, transparency, and that which is Divine and righteous. All is light and holiness, and peace.

"O happy city of our God!
O sweet and pleasant soil!
In thee no sorrow can be found,
No grief, no care, no toil."

The *twelve gates* always open, seen in each direction, north, south, east, and west, tell us, too, of administrative government. The gate of a city, in Scripture language, is the place of rule, power, and judgment. Hence we get the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written thereon. We must remember here, that though the scene is simply one of the bride, the Lamb's wife, yet the period is the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Others will be associated in the reign with the bride, though not distinctively of her; for we have been previously taught, that all who are in

the first resurrection {Rev. 20:5, 6}

live and reign with Christ. In that day, too, heaven will be truly God's throne, and the earth His footstool, yet the place of His feet shall be glorious. It will be glory above and glory below, each distinct, and yet one whole kingdom-scene of power and glory; for the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. When the heavens are thus opened, angels of God will be seen ascending and descending upon the Son of man. All His various relationships shall then be sustained in infinite beauty, order, perfection, and truth. As the last Adam, Head of the body, Bridegroom of the Church, King of Israel, Governor among the nations, King over all the earth, He shall wear His many crowns and dispense His manifold blessings; and as He, the Upholder of all things, now sustains the mighty planets in their various revolutions, so then, when *all things* are gathered together in one, both things on earth and things in heaven, even in Him, there shall still be diversity, even as in creation's fair history it is recorded that every fruit tree yielded fruit after his kind.

The kings of the earth bring their glory to or unto this city. Those dwelling there eat of the fruit of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God. (Rev. 2:7). The *leaves* of the tree minister healing to the nations, which is enlightened by the glory of the city. It will be a chain of golden links of rich and varied blessings, each part of the different kingdom spheres dependent one on another, and all dependent on the Lord.

It shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord;
I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the
earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they
shall hear Jezreel (Hos.2:21, 22),

the seed of God.

The living water, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb, pure and clear, flows copiously like a river, deepening and widening in its progress, through this city of heavenly blessing. All drink plentiful draughts of its endless, exhaustless depths of grace. Each sees the face of Jesus, and bears His name in the forehead; and then will be realized more fully what we know in some little measure now, that

the joy of the Lord is our strength {see Neh. 8:10};

for service will still flow from a joyful heart in ministry to the need of the nations. And out of this city shall flow judgment, and, doubtless, blessing too, to the favoured tribes of Israel's land: for our Lord's promise to the apostle was, that in the regeneration, which is the time we are considering,

Ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel

It seems, from the prophet Ezekiel, that the millennial city of restored Israel will be almost a counterpart of the heavenly city: and among other similitudes, water will so flow out from under the threshold of the house of the Lord, as to become so deep and wide as to form a river to swim in, and which will give life to every thing whithersoever the river shall come. Nor is this the only idea of life and blessing in connection with the times of restitution, the period of Israel's glory; for we are told, that

by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf for medicine (Ezek. 47:12).

Then Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the whole earth with fruit. Out of the *earthly* city shall flow earthly glory, government, and blessing. The inhabitants of Zion shall be joyful in their King, while they and the saved nations walk in the light of the golden city. Then

the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all *nations* shall flow unto it. And *many people* shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2, 3).

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee (Psa. 22:27).

Creation, too, will rejoice in her liberty from the groaning and bondage of corruption, at the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19-22). The Lord then, sitting upon the throne of His father David, shall judge the people in righteousness, and the poor with judgment. (See Psa. 72.)

The *pearly gates* and variety of *precious stones* and *gold* that mark the structure of this symbolic city show us how costly are its materials; and when we think that it is the bride, the Lamb's wife, her priceless value in God's sight, the cost, the unutterable cost of that city is forced upon our minds. When none else could redeem, we know that Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that he might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. What a price! What costly stones are sinners saved by the blood of the Lamb! How precious they must be to the heart of the Lord Jesus!

"Oh yes, Christ loves the Church,
'Tis her He lives to bless;
He cannot love her more,
Nor will He love her less;
Bone of His bone, cleansed by His word,
A bride adorned meet for her Lord."

It is interesting to observe the Scripture notices of "gold" and "precious stones," so largely characteristic of this heavenly city.

When this fair creation came fresh from the Maker's hands, we are told that Eden not only had a river flowing through it to water the garden, but that it had gold and bdellium and the onyx stone; or as the inspired prophet by the river of Chebar more fully expresses it,

Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God: every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold (Ezek. 28:13).

Creation then was something on which God's eye and heart could rest, and pronounce very good. But sin came in and marred this beautiful, spotless universe. It was soon overrun with the foul spirit of the prince of darkness, and we see not the precious stones and gold brought into prominence until there was something introduced in which God could again delight. The tabernacle and priesthood, in connection with an elect people, bring precious stones again before us in settings of gold. The breastplate and shoulder-pieces of the high priest were resplendent with the dazzling glory of the costly stones in their gold inclosures. They were a shadow of good things to come. They pictured glory as resulting from Divine grace through the redemption work of Jesus. But soon again these shadowy jewels passed away. A dark history set in, and the holy Son of God, the tried stone and the precious stone, was found here in veiled glory, a stranger and despised One in this world that He had fashioned. He wore no jewels, for He Himself was the precious corner stone. His glory was in humiliation and rejection as the righteous and holy One. His beauty and glory were hid from the carnal eye; but once and again heaven opened to declare,

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased
{Matt. 3:17; 17:5}.

The glory of His humiliation and death will shine eternally in untarnished lustre. His sufferings and sacrifice were the golden chains of Divine love to unite us to God for ever.

"That visage marred, those sorrows deep,
The vinegar and gall;
These were the golden chains of love,
His captives to enthrall."

But His sufferings are over. He has accomplished eternal redemption. He is now at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor. We get no more mention of "gold" and "precious stones" till we read of true saints, those who are not "wood, hay, and stubble," merely of earth's growth, but those who are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.

It is interesting, however, to observe, that the devil, who mimics God whenever he can, so as most effectually to deceive, uses gold and precious stones. He misplaces the type, to blind souls to the antitype. The gospel declares that Christ is a precious stone, and that believers in Him are precious stones also. But Satan says, No. He adorns Babylon with all manner of precious stones, and furnishes her with a golden cup by which to intoxicate and deceive. The true believer knows nothing "precious," apart from Christ. He Himself is "precious," His blood is precious, faith is precious, because it links us on to Him, and the trial of faith is precious, because it will be found to His praise and honor at His appearing.

Again, however, there will be that on which the eye and heart of God can rest. Israel, His earthly people, shall yet be numbered up as His jewels, and introduced into terrestrial glory; and the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be in heavenly glory, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. It is permanent, lasting blessing. The new creation shall have eternal lustre, all flowing from the wondrous sufferings and death of the Lamb of God. Fair and comely in His sight, she shall be manifested as established in everlasting blessing and security before God. We can understand then, I think, why "gold" and "precious stones" are here again used, -- to show the priceless

value, stability, and glory of those who are so loved by God, and brought into such unchanging nearness to Him through the blood of the Lamb.

No *temple* is seen here, because all are at home with God and the Lamb. A temple always gives the idea of the worshiper being at a distance from God; He is as it were enshrined, because of His holiness. Even now a temple is out of place for those who are made nigh by the blood of Christ, and therefore have right and title, through the rent veil, to approach God Himself, because of that one Sacrifice which was once offered, and the ever living High Priest. The seer therefore tells us, when contemplating the glorious vision of this holy city,

I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it (Rev. 21:22).

Nor was there any need of *created* light; whether of sun or moon, nor of *artificial* light -- no need of the *candle*; for there shall be no night there; and also because

the Lord God giveth them light (Rev. 22:5)

--

the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev. 21:23).

There is a remarkable similarity between the scene of the first man in blessing in Eden and the holy Jerusalem. We are told that in creation's primal glory there was a river and gold and precious stones, a happy created universe, a tree of life, the man and his wife. A progeny also is contemplated --

Be fruitful, and multiply {Gen. 1:28}.

The Lord God is mentioned too, in connection with all, and finding rest in all. There was also the tree of knowledge, as a test of man's faithfulness. In the closing scene of the Apocalypse we have a river of life, gold and precious stones, circles of glory and blessing extending over the kingdom, the tree of life (much of which description is doubtless symbolical language) and the Lord God, the throne of God and the Lamb, the Bride the Lamb's wife in connection with it all. But here there is no tree of knowledge; for man had been tried in various ways, and always found to be incapable of standing, except as upheld by God. So now; being made to stand upon the everlasting efficacy of the blood of the Lamb, his perfect security rests on the ground of redemption. There shall therefore be no more curse. How precious the blood of Christ is, and should be, to us!

"O precious blood! O glorious death!
By which the sinner lives;
When stung with sin this blood we view.
And all our joy revives.

"The blood that makes His glorious Church
From every blemish free;
And oh, the riches of His love,
He poured it out for me!

"The Father's everlasting love,
And Jesu's precious blood,
Shall be our endless themes of praise
In yonder blest abode"

Chapter 22:6-21: Concluding Verses

As we had introductory remarks to the sayings of the prophecy of this book, so we find concluding statements which appear as postscripts to a letter. The prominent thought in them is the Lord's announcement to the assemblies of His own speedy coming. This is what we should have expected. What so welcome to the members of His body as Himself! It would have been strange for our Lord to have given us various details of things coming upon the earth, without plainly keeping before us our proper hope -- the one hope of our calling. The Spirit of Christ in the prophets was wont to guide them to conclude their testimonies with earth's only hope -- the day of the Lord -- Messiah's reign -- the times of restitution which follow righteous judgments; but in the apocalyptic testimony to the assemblies, we find the relief for the heart oppressed by the sorrows coming upon the children of men, is the Lord's coming to receive *us* unto Himself.

In order to leave no room for question, as to the reality and accomplishment of this prophetic book, we are assured that

these sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must *shortly* be done (Rev. 22:6).

Thus the Divine character of the prophetic testimony is attested, and the introductory announcement repeated, that these things will *shortly* come to pass. Time hurries on with rapid flight. Events follow in such quick succession, that eternal realities will soon dawn upon a slumbering world. How secretly, yet surely, the leaven of infidelity is diffusing itself! How rapidly the spirit of irreverence for the things of God, and desire for the exaltation of man, are growing! What patronage, too, the great harlot is receiving! How many seem satisfied to have their intellects amused and senses intoxicated with the adulterous wine, because it still allows the *heart* to maintain its enmity against God, and leaves the *conscience* unmoved by its sin and guilt; and with what increasing boldness among all nations she holds out the golden cup, brimful of all manner of filthiness, to the myriads of passers by! These things are enough to show us how soon the apocalyptic prophecies may be accomplished, and how unmistakably we see the day approaching.

What effect, beloved, should these things have upon us whose citizenship is in heaven, but to look for the Savior! What else can meet the need of our hearts? Hence the next words are,

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:7}!

because it is Christ who is our hope; not events, but the Lord Himself.

“For thee, His royal Bride, for thee,
His brightest glories shine;
And, happier still, His changeless love,
With all its joy; is thine.”

John tells us that he saw and heard these things, and that the effect of seeing and hearing them was most overpowering. And not only so; for, alas! how weak is man! how little can any of us bear! how badly can we be trusted! Again we find this honored seer at the angel's feet, a worshiper of that bright messenger who had showed him these things. Again the honored vessel came between him and the Lord. He idolizes the instrument; he worships the creature, though he did it ignorantly. He might have thought that this heavenly messenger was Jesus. Solemn lesson for us. Alas! how true it is that we are kept by the power of God. The angel, however, is more faithful than the loved and aged seer, and rebukes him for his folly.

Then saith he, See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and [the fellow-servant] of thy brethren the prophets. Worship God (Rev. 22:8, 9).

Would, beloved, that we might be instructed by this angel to be more ready than we are to refuse everything that robs God of what belongs to Him and that we had a deeper sense in our souls of what is due to Christ, so as to be alone jealous for His glory. This surely is the only way of realizing present blessing.

The prophet Daniel was told to go his way, because

the words are closed up and sealed *till* the time of the end (Dan. 12);

but John is told to

seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand (Rev. 22:10).

The things here revealed are therefore to be published; men are both to be instructed and warned, because the time is so very near. How important and necessary it is, therefore, for those who would be faithful servants of Christ to be well acquainted with the things here revealed; for they are no longer to be sealed, but to be made known. A few more fleeting moments and man's eternal doom will be for ever fixed; and though myriads of ages roll on, the sentence will be,

He that is unjust, let him be unjust *still* (Rev. 22:11).

Those who *now* act so unjustly toward the God of all grace and His only-begotten Son, the Savior of sinners, will *then* ever be among the unjust. Let ten thousand times ten thousand years pass, and still it will be said,

He which is filthy, let him be filthy *still* (Rev. 22:11).

Having despised the only sin-cleansing remedy, they will learn in outer darkness that nothing but the blood of Jesus could cleanse a sinner, and make him fit to stand in God's infinitely holy presence. Ah, how little men think that they insult God and dishonor Christ by refusing that only atonement which He has provided for sinners in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! But of those who have

accepted Christ as their Savior, who are sanctified by His blood, and made the righteousness of God in Him, it will be for ever true --

He that is righteous, let him be righteous *still*; and he that is holy, let him be holy *still* (Rev. 22:11).

The fifteenth verse shows us the unclean ones outside -- the Gentile dogs as well as the children of Babylon, the mother of harlots and abominations, or idolatries; those who in heart depart from God to gratify their lusts, and all others who loved the lie of infidelity, which is always placed by the enemy in opposition to the truth, which truth those only love who are truly born of God.

Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie (Rev. 22:15).

But on the other hand, how sweet it is to see our precious Lord reminding us that His blood-washed ones have title to stand in changeless blessing before God, even in the unsullied holiness of His glorious presence, there to feed upon living realities, and enter into the kingdom of the living God.

Blessed are they that do His commandments [or rather, Blessed are they that wash their robes], that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city (Rev. 22:14).

We find, within the compass of a few verses, that the Lord announces His speedy coming three times, as if in this last letter it should be the last thought He would impress upon our minds. He also reminds us of His eternal Godhead --

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last (Rev. 22:13).

It need scarcely be said, that no one could lay claim to such titles but He who is God, that blessed One who left the world to go to the Father, who has sent down the Holy Ghost, and is gone to prepare a place for us. It is He who here says,

Behold, I come quickly (Rev. 22:7).

Behold, I come quickly (Rev. 22:12).

Surely, I come quickly (Rev. 22:20).

These things are testified in the Churches, to whom the Lord's last presentation of Himself is

the Root and Offspring of David, and THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR (Rev. 22:16).

As David's Creator and David's Offspring, the Godhead and manhood of Him who sent these things to the Churches are plainly set forth, and shows us that all the promises of royalty, and everything connected with the future kingdom of Israel, are secured in Him. The final sentences of this blessed book make us feel deeply that

the night is far spent {Rom. 13:12},

and we are encouraged, during the closing moments of the dark night, to look out for the Morning Star. It is the harbinger of the day. Those only who are watching see it. To such it is a glorious sight. Those who are slumbering on their beds see it not. It is a blessed prospect for us, because it is the Lord who here subscribes Himself --

I, Jesus . . . I am the bright and Morning Star {Rev. 22:16}.

We know it will be followed by

the Sun of righteousness {Mal. 4:2}

arising upon this desolate earth with healing in His wings, when He will make up His jewels of the elect people of Israel, and tread down the wicked as ashes under His feet. But there is no allusion, in this presentation of the Lord as the Morning Star, to any judgment upon the ungodly, which characterizes the testimony of prophets, because here it is simply the announcement of Him who is coming to meet us in the air, and receive us unto Himself. Our joy will be full then; for we shall see Him as He is, before Israel and the earth are delivered from their oppression. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Therefore we wait for God's Son from heaven, the bright and Morning Star, to take us out of this scene, and to be for ever with Him and like Him.

"Panting with rapture and surprise,
'Caught up,' our fond affections rise,
Our coming Lord to meet;
Hearing the trumpet's glorious sound;
Soaring to join the rising crowd;
Gazing upon the parted cloud
Beneath His pierced feet.

"O blessed, O thrice blessed word!
To be 'for ever with the Lord'
In heavenly beauty, fair!
Up! up! we long to hear the cry,
Up! up! our coming Lord draws nigh,
Yes, 'in the twinkling of an eye,'
To meet Him in the air."

No sooner, then, does the blessed Lord present Himself as the bright and Morning Star, than there is a response, --

The Spirit and the Bride say, COME {Rev. 22:17};

for it is the Holy Ghost dwelling in the saints that teaches them, and enables them to say,

Come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

It is well to see that the Holy Spirit shows us things to come, and inspires us with hope; that He teaches us to cry,

Come, Lord Jesus.

Surely nothing else could ever satisfy the bride's heart; for she is espoused to one husband, and her assurance is that she will be presented as a chaste virgin unto Christ. Those who are taught of God love the Lord Jesus. They truly say --

"No object so glorious we see,
And none so attractive to us."

The affections and desires of the saints are drawn out after Christ, for what He is in Himself, in all the perfectness of Divine and changeless love. It would seem as if there were an intimation here of bridal affections characterizing saints just before the Lord's return: not all saints; for the next sentence shows us that some are not thus responding to our Lord's revelation of Himself as

the bright and Morning Star:

hence the exhortation,

Let him that heareth say, Come {Rev. 22:17}.

And is it not very remarkable how love for the person of our Lord, and desire for His coming, characterize many saints now? In almost all times of the history of the Church there have been those who have rejoiced before God in the finished work of Christ,

in their completeness and security in Him, in the blessedness of redemption by His blood, and have willingly suffered for His sake. But there is something more in the present day, low and humbling as our condition is in many respects; there is a manifest, and I think in some an increasing attachment to the Lord Himself, with the longing desire to see Him. In many parts of England and Ireland, on the Continent, and in other parts of the world, how frequently is the cry going up to heaven from longing souls, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" and in various ways how cherished and cultivated are what may be properly called bridal affections towards Christ? And if so, is it not like the rousing of the slumbering virgins at the cry of,

Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him
{Matt. 25:6}?

which is soon followed by all those who have oil in their vessels with their lamps meeting Him, and going to the marriage. Who knows how soon this blessed hope may be realized by us, beloved! How encouraging this view of the subject is, and how calculated to stir the affections of our souls in becoming fervour to our Lord!

But further. In connection with this, as I have noticed, there appear to be some who do not say,

Come, Lord Jesus;

hence it is added,

Let him that heareth say, Come.

What hinders them from thus responding to our Lord? Is it from bad teaching, a lack of spiritual instruction on the subject? Is it worldliness of spirit? for eating and drinking with the drunken is associated in Scripture with the unholy sentiment,

My Lord delayeth His coming {Matt. 24:48; Luke 12:45}.

Is it carnal-mindedness? allowing fleshly lusts and tempers to grieve and quench the Spirit of God, and thus hinder His teaching. It may be that malice, guile, hypocrisy, and evil speakings, are not laid aside (for they are natural to us all), and spiritual desires and growth are checked, and thus hinder the cry in the soul, of Come, Lord Jesus! Is it the habit of carelessness and insubjection to Christ, not keeping His words? for the Church is supposed in Scripture to be subject unto Christ; and those true to Him, who keep His words, sayings, and commandments, are promised the enjoyment of sweet manifestations of Christ, and abiding fellowship with the Father and the Son. Whatever it be that hinders the soul from truly giving utterance to the cry of

Come, Lord Jesus,

it should be detected and judged; for the inspired declaration is,

Let him that heareth say, Come {Rev. 22:17}.

With this intimation of a company on earth inspired with bridal affections towards Christ, we have also bowels of mercies going out in deep Christ-like love and compassion towards the lost around. This is another important thought in reference to the present day; for who has not observed how largely the gospel of the grace of God has gone forth of late, and that by servants of God who look for the coming of our Lord! Here they are linked together, for a present salvation is associated in Scripture with this blessed hope; and who can conceive a heart really touched with love towards Christ, and waiting for His coming, that does not long for the salvation of souls? I know nothing so calculated to fill

as with holy zeal in the gospel as the scriptural hope of the Lord's coming. If the above view be correct, we may be now in the very closing days of the Church's history on earth.

The "thirsty" are considered here. Disturbed or dissatisfied with what their poor hearts have tasted, they crave something more. Earth's charms have been vainly tried. Nature's resources are exhausted. The emptiness of men's inventions painfully experienced. Their own hope of self-improvement has been woefully disappointing. That which they most eagerly sought has failed to satisfy. A dead fly has been found in it all. The soul longs and pants for something else. It really thirsts for what can give present rest, and meet eternal realities. Such are here addressed,

Let him that is *athirst* come {Rev. 22:17}.

The Lord Jesus alone can relieve such. He can give rest. His blood purges the conscience. He gives eternal life. He saves at once and for ever.

But there are many who seem not to thirst; but they are unsaved, going on the broad road, trying to get comfort in themselves, or in the world, or anywhere but in Christ. Such were some of us. Still the gospel addresses itself, to *sinners, ungodly, enemies*. As the Lord said in the beginning of His ministry,

whosoever believeth in Him should not perish
{John 3:15, 16},

so now, at the very close, it is,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely
{Rev. 22:17}.

It is the fullest, freest grace. Throwing His loving arms wide open, He welcomes any, every sinner that will take eternal life at His hands as a free gift. How rich is this mercy. Can anything exceed the gracious fervour of the Lord toward the lost? or can a more thorough welcome be intimated to the soul that desires eternal life? It is not a question of terms or conditions, but God in Christ taking the place of a *giver*, and making the soul eternally happy that is willing to be a *receiver*, content to be saved in God's way -- thus accepting Christ as his Savior, and giving all the glory to God! Observe, it is not a question of *religion* at all; there is no room for pleading *ordinances*, no advantage proffered to the *moralist*, nothing repulsive set before the most *profane*: it is simply a question of life eternal, and possessed, too, not by those who hold orthodox views even of the gospel, but by those who *take* Christ as their Savior: not by those who say they think of Christ, or pray to Christ, or work for Christ; but by those who *take* Christ:

Whosoever will, let him *take* the water of life freely
{Rev. 22:17}.

Worship, service, and other *fruits of faith*, of course follow. They are the *effects* of life received, not the *cause*. A mistake here is of eternal importance. The saved sinner can sing --

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Behold, I freely give
The living water: thirsty one,
Stoop down, and drink, and live.'
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream,
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him."

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
 'I am this dark world's light.
 Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
 And all thy day be bright.'
 I looked to Jesus, and I found
 In Him my star, my sun;
 And in that light of life I'll walk
 Till travelling days are done."

Before this blessed little book is concluded, we find a remarkable parenthesis. The awful sins of adding to and taking from God's Word are plainly insisted upon. These we know are not uncommon errors. The Lord especially refers to the book of Revelation, but the Old Testament sounds a somewhat similar warning.

Every word of God is pure. . . . Add thou not to His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Prov. 30:5, 6).

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it (Deut. 4:2).

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it (Deut. 12:32).

The Lord has been always jealous for the maintenance of His own truth. Saul lost the kingdom because he obeyed not the word of the Lord (1 Sam. 15:28).

We know, too, what judgments came upon Jehoiakim king of Judah for cutting and burning the word of the Lord written on the roll of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 36:29, 30). The canon of Scripture is complete. To add to it must be deeply offensive to God. It must be the fruit of a proud and unbelieving heart. The warning is addressed to every man that even *heareth* the prophecy of this book; and in executing the sentence, God will be no respecter of persons.

If *any man* shall *add* unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book (Rev. 22:18).

Nor is it a light thing either to take away from the complete revelation that God has graciously given. Believers are supposed in Scripture to be

subject unto Christ (Eph. 5:24).

Practical Christianity consists in owning the lordship of Jesus: and the Christian's warfare is carried on in the exercise of

casting down imaginations [reasonings], and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every *thought* to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4, 5).

The soul, therefore, that is spiritual, under divine teaching, cannot fail to be jealous for God's Word. The old sin of making the Word of God of none effect by man's tradition is still round about us; for the unsubdued will is ever read to own any other authority than God's and follow any other guidance. Man's traditions, however, alter according to circumstances, and the commandments of men pass away with those who decree them; but

the word of the Lord endureth for ever {1 Pet. 1:25}.

Jesus said,

I have given them thy word {John 17:14}.

Thy word is truth {John 17:17}.

Sanctify them through thy truth {John 17:17}.

And we are here most solemnly warned against lowering the divine standard, and taking the unholy liberty of setting aside any portion of the truth of the Revelation.

If *any man* shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part [portion] out of the book of life, ¹² and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:19).

Can anything be more solemn? or could any words be more thoroughly invested with divine authority? Need we anything more to persuade us of the deep value and weighty import of the book? or to prompt us to read it with prayerfulness of spirit and true subjection of heart before God? We know how ready the intellect is to frame theories, and go to the Scripture for some license for their existence; in other words, to go to God's Word to get something to endorse a system, instead of bowing down in self-loathing, and felt ignorance, to receive what God has to say to us in His Word by the Spirit's teaching. O for real subjection of heart to Christ!

Again and again, as we have before noticed, the Lord announces at the close of this book that He is coming quickly, and each announcement is connected with a different character of thought, which we may do well to consider.

The first is,

Behold I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book (Rev. 22:7).

We were assured, at the opening of the Revelation, of the blessing connected with those who keep the things written therein; and though, doubtless, such feel now the blessing of God in all their endeavours to keep what is here set forth, still the Lord's own testimony of approval will be specially known by each one at His coming. This prophetic book shows us the working of principles, and their results. Lawlessness is here described in all its horrible ungodliness. Religiousness comes out in dark forms of infidelity and superstition. Things true and things false stand here in widest contrast. Christ and Antichrist, the remnant and the apostate people, the bride and the harlot, are all brought out. Every vision carries with it some deep, searching, moral testimony to the affections and conscience. The sayings of the prophecy of this book are powerfully commended to the heart and judgment. The Lamb in majesty and glory is here seen. He is the great object of attraction.

"No place too high for Him is found,
 No place too high in heaven."

It is therefore an eminently sanctifying book, most awakening to the spiritual affections and desires, most instructive as to the principles of everything at work around us; so that those who heed its teaching must get immense blessing now, and find the Lord's approval at His coming.

Secondly, we find in the 12th verse,

Behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be (Rev. 22:12).

12. "The book of life" is generally rendered "the tree of life." It is not the same thing as the present possession of eternal life; nor is it "the Lamb's book of life," or a reference to the names written therein before the foundation of the world.

Not a cup of cold water given to a disciple out of love to Jesus shall lose its reward then. When our Lord spake of making a feast, and calling the poor, the lame, the halt, and the blind, He said,

Thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just (Luke 14:14).

Those who do not glide down the religious stream, but are separate in heart and walk unto the Lord, in subjection to His word and Spirit, must be content to be present losers, to be misunderstood, and not surprised at having their motives misjudged; but we must walk before Him who searches the heart, and by whom actions are weighed, knowing that when He comes again He will not withhold His

Well done {Matt. 25:21, 23}

from what He can approve. How different will many things appear then! How much that is now applauded will be found lighter than vanity, when tried in the balance of the sanctuary; and how truly it will be manifested then, that things which are highly esteemed among men are an abomination in the sight of God. But Jesus says,

My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

How encouraging! We have now to

fight the good fight of faith {1 Tim. 6:12},

to

earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints {Jude 1:3},

to

keep the word of His patience {see Rev. 3:10},

to be

obedient children {1 Pet. 1:14};

in a word, to follow Christ. We are to suffer *with* Christ, and suffer *for* Christ; to bear the reproach of Christ; to be rejected with Christ; not to be ashamed of the gospel of Christ; and in all things to serve the Lord Christ. We are to be mindful of everything around us only in relation to Christ; to have an eye to His glory, to walk worthy of the Lord unto all well pleasing, to continue in His love, and manifest true friendship to Him, so that His joy may remain in us, and that our joy may be full. Happy are those who can esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of the world, because they have respect unto the recompense of the reward; or, like the apostles, can rejoice at being counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Jesus.

We now come to the third and final announcement of our Lord's return. They are the Lord's last words to the Churches, and are most cheering --

Surely I come quickly {Rev. 22:20}.

This assurance leaves no room for a question. What our Lord's thought of "quickly" may be, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, is a point we might consider; but certain it is that He thus leaves his Church in the position of expectancy of Himself. Whatever events have been recorded, He presents Himself as the alone hope, and He would

have us in the posture of patiently waiting for Him, and occupying till He comes.

Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching (Luke 12:37).

A hearty sympathy with our Lord's announcement is then brought out --

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}.

It is not merely, "Come," but,

Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Nothing can be plainer. It is the outflowing of affection to the Lord Himself. It is the longing heart of Jesus meeting with true response in His saints. Are we, beloved reader, in sympathy with the blessed Lord? It is possible to hold the doctrine of the Lord's coming, and to have knowledge of prophetic truth, without having the Lord Jesus, as the longing desire of the soul. It is not knowledge, but *the hope*, that purifies, and separates us unto the Lord (1 John 3:3). I ask, then, Is He the hope of our souls? Is it Christ Himself that we are looking for? This is eminently practical, and soul-purifying: for a believer not to be waiting for God's Son from heaven is sadly defective, and connected with great spiritual loss.

The time may be short or long, according to human reckoning, before our Lord's return; but during the interval there is all-sufficient grace in Him for every need and distress; and thus the Revelation concludes with,

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with yon all. Amen {Rev. 22:21}.

"Lord Jesus, come!

Nor let us longer roam

Afar from thee, and that bright place
Where we shall see thee face to face:

Lord Jesus, come!

"Lord Jesus, come!

Thine absence here we mourn.

Nor joy we know apart from thee,
Nor sorrow in thy presence see:

Come, Jesus, come!

"Lord Jesus, come!

And claim us as thine own;

Our weary feet would wander o'er
This dark and sinful world no more:

Come, Savior, come!

"Lord Jesus, come!

And take thy people home,

That all thy flock, so scattered here,
With thee in glory may appear:

Lord Jesus, come!"

Streams of Refreshing
From
The Fountain of Life

by

H. H. Snell

“Jesus said, If any man thirst,
let him come unto Me, and drink.”
John 7:37.

Sixth Edition.

LONDON:
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1886

Preface

This little volume is about JESUS the Son of God, and sets forth God's way of saving sinners. It is hoped that the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ will be found the most prominent object in it, and that it is calculated not only to arrest the careless and thoughtless, but to confirm and comfort weak and troubled saints.

In the blood of Jesus God speaks peace and love to every sinner that believes; and that same precious blood enables the believer to draw near and keep near to God. The blood of Christ, being the true ground of peace and source of confidence in God; gives rest of conscience in God's presence, where Jesus now is, and fills the heart with praise.

Many believers, however, are in great bondage. They truly look to Christ for salvation, and *have* eternal life, though they are scarcely sensible of it. Like Lazarus, when he left the tomb, they really have life, but are unable to walk in liberty, to minister for the Lord, or happily confess His name, because of the grave-clothes which envelop them. They struggle; but they are fettered, and need to be loosed. Some vainly try to get liberty by looking into their own hearts, or are expecting to receive it from some man, instead of *looking only to Christ, and believing His Word*. It is of the utmost importance that the

believer should learn from God's truth *his security and standing in Christ*; that he is *already* a child of God, on the other side of death, in the heavenlies *in* Christ Jesus; not yet *with*, but *in*, Christ Jesus. This being realized, the natural inquiry must be, What is my hope? We reply, The Lord's coming. We do not hope to have everlasting life; for he that believeth *hath* everlasting life (John 5:24). We do not hope for forgiveness of sins; this also we have *now*:

In whom *we have* redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7).

We do not hope for righteousness; this too we have *now*; for

Christ *is* the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4).

What, then, do we look for? The inspired reply is,

We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3:20, 21).

Such are the precious truths of God's Word to which the reader's attention is called in this little volume. It is sent forth, with much conscious infirmity, in dependence on the God of all grace, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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Fear Not

And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. (Revelation 1:17, 18).

Every one of us must have to do with the Lord Jesus. Each person will yet come before Him. Nothing can possibly hinder this. The joyful expectation of the Christian is, that he will see his Savior's face and be like Him. Those who are not born again -- unbelievers -- will assuredly see Jesus too, but not with joy: as a wicked man once said,

I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but *not nigh* {Num. 24:17}.

Many persons *now* turn away from the Savior's name; they like to banish His blessed gospel from their thoughts; but *then*,

at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father {see Phil. 2:10, 11}.

This is God's decree, and it must be accomplished.

The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations {Psa. 33:11}.

There is, therefore, no possibility of escape from having to do with Jesus; and I doubt not that those who will go away into everlasting punishment will send up a cry continually from the pit of torment, that Jesus Christ is Lord. This is very solemn, and makes the gospel a matter of such individual application and importance. The Scripture says, "*every knee*," "*every tongue*," "*every one of us shall give account of himself* in the day of judgment!"

Behold, He cometh with clouds, and *every eye* shall see Him {Rev. 1:7}!

plainly showing that men must have to do *personally* with the Lord Jesus. *Now* He *graciously* pardons and saves; *then* He will *righteously* condemn, and punish with everlasting destruction. What folly, then, it is to neglect His great salvation!

In these verses of the Revelation we find that John *saw* the Lord Jesus, and he says,

When I *saw Him*, I fell at His feet as dead {Rev. 1:17}.

So dazzling and refulgent is the glorified Savior, that even His most intimate and beloved servants, while in the body, cannot catch a glimpse of Him without being overpowered by the brightness of His glory. Perhaps there never was a man on earth who knew such deep intimacy with Jesus as John. We find him with the Lord in the days of His flesh on every remarkable occasion. At the Supper he was the only one of the disciples that leaned on His bosom; and in an anxious moment he only could turn to his loving Master and say,

Lord, who is it? {John 13:25}.

And further, when Jesus was betrayed and apprehended, and all others forsook Him, John followed Him into the High Priest's palace, and stood by Him to the last, even at the cross. John, then, must have known very deep intimacy with the Lord, and his

writings show how richly the love of God was shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost.

John was also faithful after the Savior left the world. He was transported to the isle of Patmos for his godly life and testimony. It is important to notice that he was banished, not so much for the doctrines he held, as for what he said and did; for in this chapter he tells us that he

was in the isle that is called Patmos for the word of God, and for the *testimony* of Jesus Christ {Rev. 1:9}.

Most persons around us now have no objection to the outward forms of religion, and will allow you to hold what doctrines you please, provided you keep them to yourself; but the unrenewed mind still kicks against faithful testimony in life and word to the infinite and glorious perfections of the person, work, offices, fitness, and fulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Christians *now* bore distinctly

the testimony of Jesus Christ,

we may be sure that it would still be offensive to many; for the offence of the cross has not ceased.

While John was honoring his earth-rejected Master in desolate Patmos, his Master marvelously honored him. His persecuted and banished apostle was chosen, not only to convey the Revelation to the churches, but to have such blessed views of the future as no one was ever privileged before. This is very sweet to contemplate. Accordingly, we are told that he was

in the Spirit on the Lord's day {Rev. 1:10}.

By his being

in the Spirit,

we are to understand that he was not musing or meditating according to the thoughts of the natural mind, but that he was under the guidance, control, and operations of the Holy Spirit; the thoughts of his mind, and the affections of his heart, were according to the workings of the Holy Spirit, the Testifier and Glorifier of Christ. Every believer has the Spirit; but we are not always

in the Spirit.

In this state of mind the beloved apostle suddenly heard *behind* him a trumpet-like sound so very loud, that he tells us it was

a *great voice*, as of a trumpet {Rev. 1:10}.

The voice said,

I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, &c. {Rev. 1:11}.

This was a remarkable sound, which so aroused the dear apostle, that he turned to see the voice that spoke with him; but no sooner had he looked behind him, than a marvelous vision of Christ and the Churches, resplendent with unheard of glory and beauty, met his astonished eye. He saw the churches symbolized by seven

golden candlesticks -- costly, pure, precious, heavenly, fitted to bear light; and in the midst of the candlesticks he saw the Lord; but, astounding as the great voice must have been, and beautiful as the appearance of the seven candlesticks must have been, it was neither the one nor the other that so overpowered the apostle, as the sight of Christ Himself --

When I saw HIM, I fell at His feet as dead {Rev. 1:17}.

Oh, my reader, it is not being taken up with the Church, or sounds, or sights of any kind, apart from Christ, that really humbles us; but when by faith we feel near the risen Savior, it is this that withers up fleshly pretensions, that exposes the filthiness of creature-righteousness, makes us feel in an atmosphere that breathes holy solemnity into the soul, and gives deep reality of feeling to the heart and conscience. It was when Job was brought to say,

Now mine eye seeth thee {Job 42:5},

that he abhorred himself, and repented in dust and ashes. When Isaiah saw the glory of the Lord, he exclaimed,

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips {Isa. 6:5}.

The beloved Daniel tells us,

When I saw this great vision, there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength {see Dan. 10:8}.

The prophet Habakkuk also says,

When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself {Hab. 3:16}.

Ah! my reader, be assured that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. In His holy presence our depravity and weakness are made manifest; there we learn that we are really fallen creatures, corrupt, and very unlike Him who is of purer eyes than to behold evil. Here we find that God's balance is infinitely holy, His weights perfectly just, and that, weighed by Him, we are

found wanting {Dan. 5:27}.

Oh, that *you*, dear reader, might be led to consider, not what you are as compared with your neighbours, but what you are *before God*, and how you will meet the Lord Jesus at His coming!

I say, it was a *sight* of the Lord Jesus that brought John down at His feet as dead {Rev. 1:17}.

Though he had full assurance that he was born again, that he was a son of God, that all his sins were purged, that he was in-dwelt by the Spirit, and therefore, as to his eternal state, he had nothing to fear; yet the glory of the ascended Lord was more than he could bear while in this body. In a momentary glimpse, John seemed to eye the adorable Lord from head to foot. He tells us, that He was

like unto the Son of man {Rev. 1:13},

and yet He declared Himself to be

the First and the Last {Rev. 1:11}.

And in this brief account we find His Person -- God and Man -- beautifully expressed. Who can be

the First and the Last,

but the eternal Godhead? and who is

like unto the Son of man,

but He who was in

the likeness of sinful flesh {Rom. 8:3},

and

was found in fashion as a man {see Phil. 2:8}?

We may gather from His being

in the midst of the seven candlesticks {Rev. 1:13},

that He is in Spirit with the Churches, though personally absent.

His eyes,

which once wept tears of sympathy and pity, now,

as a flame of fire {Rev. 1:14},

show us that nothing escapes His observation; He therefore says to every assembly,

I know thy works {Rev. 2:2}.

The sharp two-edged sword {Rev. 1:16},

and

His voice as the sound of many waters {Rev. 1:15},

may teach us that He judges and reproves; while the

garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle {Rev. 1:13},

may remind us that He is not now mocked with a purple robe, nor is His sacred bosom now exposed to the rude centurion's spear; but that He is girded for the service of judging the assemblies.

We may learn, perhaps, from

His head and His hairs white like wool, as white as snow {Rev. 1:14},

that He is the I AM, perfect in purity and spotlessness. The seven stars in His right hand {Rev. 1:16}

may teach us that He is the source, the upholder, and sovereign controller of all ministry in His Church, and that it all flows from the hand that was pierced on Calvary's cross; while

His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace {Rev. 1:15},

may teach us that though He was crucified through weakness, when His foot were nailed to the tree, yet that now all judgment is committed unto Him, He will tread

the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God {Rev. 19:15},

and that

He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet {1 Cor. 15:25}.

And what can

His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength {Rev. 1:16}

set before us, but that He who once condescended to be spit upon and smitten for us, whose visage was

marred more than any man {Isa. 52:14},

is now the exalted Head of the Church, Head too of all principality and power, and in the full enjoyment of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was?

“The head that once was crown’d with thorns
Is crown’d with glory now;
Heaven’s royal diadem adorns
The mighty victor’s brow.”

What a glorious sight of the Lord had John! and though it so affected him as to bring him

as dead {Rev. 1:17}

at His feet, nevertheless he afterwards found that the feet of Jesus was the place of honor and blessing; and this is not the only instance in the New Testament. When the Lord Jesus appeared to Saul, and arrested him in his persecuting zeal by a glorious manifestation of Himself, it at once brought him prostrate on the earth. He says,

Suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground {Acts 22:6, 7}.

But though blinded with the glorious light, humbled at the feet of Jesus, and crying out to Him whom he had so blasphemed, and whose members he had so persecuted,

What shall I do, Lord? {Acts 22:10}

nevertheless, he found the feet of Jesus the place of rich and abundant blessing even for the chief of sinners. The Lord said unto him,

Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do {Acts 22:10}.

Oh, that the Spirit of God might *now* show *sinners* that the feet of Jesus is the place of blessing!

Peter is another witness of the same thing. He was fishing with his companions in the lake of Gennesaret. For many an hour he had been casting his net in vain. At last Jesus entered the ship; and when He had finished preaching, He prayed Peter to launch out into the deep, and let down the net for another draught. Peter appears to have thought it would be of little use, because he had toiled all night without success; however, as he had been requested to do so, he did it, when the multitude of fishes was so great that the net brake. This circumstance seems to have led Peter into the understanding that the person who had thus commanded him to let down the net was the Lord; and, humbled under a sense of His amazing condescension and power, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying,

Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord {Luke 5:8}!

Observe, that Peter fell down as a *sinful* man; he felt so vile, and so unfit for the Lord’s company, that he could only bow down before Him as a sinner. But how did Jesus reply? Did He say, You are such a sinner, you shall depart from me? No. You have sinned so much that I cannot receive you? No. If you will promise to do better for the future, I will pardon the past? Oh, no! but Peter found by happy experience, in thus casting himself at Jesus’ feet as a poor guilty sinner, just as he was, that there was *grace* in the heart of Jesus to abound over all his sin. Jesus said unto him,

Fear not!

as much as to say, I welcome, pardon, cleanse, and save you; and more than this, you shall be honored in my service;

from henceforth thou shalt catch men {Luke 5:10}.

Oh, what grace there is for self-abased sinners at the Savior’s feet!

“The moment a sinner believes,
And trusts in the crucified Lord,
His pardon at once he receives,
Salvation in full through His blood.”

Let us look at another instance. A woman who was notorious for her sinful ways heard that Jesus had visited the city, and was sitting at meat in the house of Simon the Pharisee. She felt the burden of her sins; her conscience was oppressed with guilt; her heart was sad. She needed a Savior, and He was near at hand. But will He save such a sinner? Can He welcome such a notoriously evil person? Will He who is so holy deign to listen to such a vile creature? Such might have been the reasonings of her distressed heart. Nevertheless, necessity compelled her to go to Jesus. She stood at His feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with ointment. Here we find another troubled soul, a conscience-stricken sinner, at the feet of Jesus. And what did the Lord say to her? Did He give her one upbraiding look? Did one reproachful word escape His lips? Oh, no; for He came

not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be *saved* {see John 3:17}.

He came to seek and to *save* that which was lost {see Luke 19:10}.

He came into the world to *save sinners* {see 1 Tim. 1:15}.

Jesus therefore said unto her,

Thy faith hath saved thee {Luke 7:50}.

Oh, how blessedly do the Savior and sinner meet together! How welcome are such to the gracious heart of Jesus! How happy for the sinner to be thus received! There is nothing here between the guilty sinner and the gracious Savior; no ordinances, no ceremonial observances, no official interferences; but simply the guilty penitent confessing, and the Son of God forgiving. And the same who had said to another,

Thy sins be forgiven thee {Matt. 9:2},

now openly declared,

Thy faith,

not thine ointment, thy tears, nor thy kiss, acceptable fruits though they were, but

Thy *faith* hath saved thee; go in *peace* {Luke 7:50}.

Now let us look again at John.

When I saw *Him*, I fell at His feet as dead.

The beloved apostle, being thus at his Master’s feet, was now in a position to learn still deeper lessons of the Savior’s love. John says,

He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not {Rev. 1:17}!

What a blessed manifestation of the compassionate heart of Jesus! How tender, how gentle, was the touch! That same right hand that had gotten eternal victory over His servant’s enemies was now again put forth on his behalf; that hand which had been once willingly pierced for his sins was again stretched out for his recovery, at the same time comforting His fainting servant with

Fear not;

as much as to say, John, you have nothing to fear, no ground for discomfort, no warrant for uneasy apprehensions; for *my* right hand is *for* you, and *not against* you. If He who has; all power in heaven and in earth, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Redeemer, and Judge of all, says,

Fear not,

what ground can there be for disquietude?

But, more than this, the Master will give His fainting servant yet more intelligent reasons for not fearing, because of His person, finished work, and exaltation.

1. HIS PERSON.

I am the First and the Last {Rev. 1:17}.

We have already referred to this. It may be well to add, that true peace must always be connected with right views of the person of Christ, because it is the dignity and glory of His person that give efficacy to His work. Take away His manhood, and we have no Substitute -- no Redeemer; take away His Godhead, and we have no atoning virtue in the blood. The blessedness is, that both God and man are found in Him. Thus He was fitted for the stupendous work of eternal redemption. He was the Days-man, that brought in all the blessing man needed, and answered all that God righteously demanded. This is another reason why John should

Fear not.

2. HIS FINISHED WORK.

I am He that liveth, and was dead {Rev. 1:18}.

As much as to say, John, I have died for you. I have borne all your sins, and removed all your transgressions from you. I have been into death instead of you, so that you shall never see death. I am alive again; therefore all your debt is cancelled, all just claims upon you as a sinner have been answered by me; and I am alive again; therefore you must live for ever.

Fear not.

3. HIS EXALTATION.

Behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death {Rev. 1:18}.

Unless every one of our sins had been purged, God could not have raised Christ from the dead. His resurrection, therefore, is God's public testimony that sin has been condemned, and for ever put away; and the risen Lord being exalted to the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor, appointed a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, invested with all power, and having all judgment committed to Him, are abundant proofs of the acceptance and security of all believers. And as to death and the grave, Who holds the keys? Did not Jesus say to His servant at His feet,

I have the keys of hell and of death?

What a comforting truth this is to the child of God! How impossible that one can sleep in death, or be laid in the grave, till Jesus unlocks the gates; and we may be assured He will open the gates for His loved ones at the best time, and it shall be neither too soon nor too late -- neither shall the way be too easy nor too painful. How wonderfully does the heart of Jesus provide comfort for His fainting servant at His feet! How very sweetly He took away his fears! Oh, Christian reader! if you are almost ready to

faint, behold your risen and exalted Savior! Think of His person; consider His finished work upon the cross; behold Him triumphing over all your enemies in resurrection; contemplate Him justly exalted in heaven to the highest pinnacle of glory as your life, ever living to make intercession for you, and see Him securely holding the keys of hell and of death. Precious, glorious facts!

“The Savior lives no more to die;
He lives our Head enthroned on high;
He lives triumphant o’er the grave;
He lives eternally to save!

He lives to still His people’s fears;
He lives to wipe away their tears;
He lives their mansions to prepare;
He lives to bring them safely there.”

Dear reader! sooner or later you must have to do with the Lord Jesus! Will it be as a *Savior*, or as a *Judge*? Will He say to you, *Come*, ye blessed? or, *Depart*, ye cursed? Will you bow your knee to Him with joy in *heaven*; or with weeping in *hell*? *Now* He says,

Whosoever will, let Him take the water of life freely
{Rev. 22:17}.

Then He will say,

Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. . . .
Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord
(Prov. 1:24-29).

Jesus Making Whole; Or, The Woman in The Crowd

“And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, when she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague” (Mark 5:24-34).

There was remarkable simplicity in the ways of Jesus. His words also were full of deep doctrine, and the more we meditate on them, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, the more we shall be convinced of the profound truth often embodied in them. His heart was always as full of grace when He walked up and down this earth doing good, as when he died upon the cross; and oh! how blessed it is to trace Him in the various incidents recorded in the gospels, and to contemplate the exceeding rich and abundant *grace* that He manifested! it is wonderful that Christ -- the only begotten of the Father -- should ever have been seen in this world of sin, except in fiery judgment; but to find Him leaving the heights of glory and bliss, to come into this evil world to save sinners, is surpassingly wonderful.

In the Scripture for our consideration we find that Jesus was in the midst of a crowd of persons. We are told that

much people followed Him {Mark 5:24}.

Thousands, probably, surrounded Him. Apostles were there, and Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue, was there also; but most of those who pressed and thronged Him came only to see His miracles, and to be partakers of His temporal bounty in the loaves.

It must have been deeply interesting to behold a man heal the sick, cast out devils, cleanse the lepers, and raise the dead to life. There was something attractive to the natural senses in seeing such miraculous power put forth. Jesus had just before cast out many devils from a man, and was on his way to a ruler's house to raise his dead child to life. There was, I say, something deeply interesting in all this. People liked to see such wonderful works. They thus made Jesus *an object of interest to their minds*; but, lamentable to say, they knew Him not as their *Savior*. They did not regard Him as the Redeemer of the lost, but as a worker of miracles. They knew Him only as an object of *prcsest interest*, but not as the author of

eternal salvation {Heb. 5:9}.

This is very solemn; but, I ask, are not the same principles at work now? Is there not a vast religious crowd all around us? Are not multitudes making Christian religion, as they call it, a subject of interest and conversation, without knowing Christ crucified as *their Savior*? It is astonishing how many people in this and other countries like to be accounted Christians. If English people go to the land of Hottentots, or to idolatrous India or China, do they not generally wish to be considered *Christians*? Oh, my reader,

beware of any religion that comes short of present forgiveness of sins, and eternal salvation through the finished work of Christ! Do not rest, I beseech you, until you can truthfully say, “Christ has cleansed *me* from all my sins, and I am in Him.”

The crowd that surrounded Jesus cared little for Him, because they knew nothing of His person and work; and the mass of people operated rather as a hindrance to a sin-convicted, helpless one coming to Jesus. So it is now. Who, I ask, are the great hinderers of the gospel in our day? Are they not those persons who make a religious profession without a vital acquaintance with Christ Himself? those who are content to hear about Christ, without having received Christ in their hearts as *their salvation*? Are not nominal Christians the very persons who cry out against brokenness of heart, repentance, the new birth, and present forgiveness of sins? But, blessed be God! whatever apparent hindrances there may be to souls coming to Jesus, His eternal purpose must stand; and a living faith in a living Savior allows nothing to hinder it from that object, which is felt to be of such pressing necessity and eternal importance -- Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

There was *one* person in the midst of this crowd of people in whose heart the Holy Spirit was effectually working, and, as far as we know, she was the *only* one. So it has often been, and still is. Hundreds and thousands crowd to hear the gospel, but the heart of *one* only may be opened to receive it.

In the narrative we are considering there are two points which I desire, as the Lord may graciously help, to make a few remarks upon.

1. The work of the Spirit in the soul of the woman; and
2. The way of Christ with this sinner.

I. THE SPIRIT'S WORK IN THE WOMAN. When the Holy Ghost takes a soul in hand, He teaches effectually. He uncovers the filthy rags of self-righteousness, exposes the rotten patches of self-reformation, and gives us a true knowledge of our state *before God*. He is the Spirit of Truth. He convinces of sin. He lays bare the heart by so applying the written word as to show its desperate wickedness in the light of God's holy presence. He fastens upon the conscience the vile workings, unclean thoughts, desires, and intents of the heart.

“He never leads a man to say,

Thank God, I'm made so good;
But turns his eye another way --
To Jesus and His blood."

Ah, my reader, it is very solemn and humiliating to be under the Holy Spirit's convicting power. He makes us feel that we are lost and undone, and shows us that every human resource is only a sandy foundation. He makes us sensible of the fact, that the all-searching eye of God is upon us, that He knows us thoroughly, and justly pronounces us to be unrighteous, unholy, and unclean *before Him*.

Now look at the woman. She not only felt that she had a disease, but that it was incurable -- that no earthly resource, no human means, could heal her. She had long tried various expedients, and knew what it was to

suffer many things {see Mark 5:26}

until she had

spent all her living {Luke 8:43};

but the end proved that

she was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse
{Mark 5:26}.

Thus *all help* failed, *all hope* was gone. She felt that her condition was hopeless, helpless, and incurably bad. Blessed picture of the Spirit's work in the soul, though a humbling and painful process for the proud heart to pass through!

Most people around us know that they are sinners. Ask whom you will, the answer is, "I know I am a sinner." But when the Spirit of God works in the *heart*, He teaches men that they are lost sinners, hell-deserving sinners, helpless, and guilty sinners *before God*. Many who say that they are sinners, do not mean that they are born in sin, full of sin, dead in sins, children of wrath. It is because people do not know their real state that they, like the woman, try this or that expediency, vainly hoping to make themselves better. They go here and there, leave off some old habits, put on a measure of outward sanctity, break through certain long-accustomed ways, and adopt other lines of pursuit; hoping in this way to commend themselves to the favour of God, and procure ease of conscience. Many a man, when he knows that he has transgressed against God's law, endeavours to atone for it by outward reformation, blindly thinking that there is some ability in himself so to act for the future as to conceal the past. But we may be sure, that if the Spirit of God is working in their souls, they will feel

nothing bettered

by these things, but that they

rather grow worse {Mark 5:26};

for the Holy Spirit will so open up to them the desperate wickedness and deceitfulness of their hearts, that, after all their carnal contrivances, they will feel the plague of sin *worse* than before.

Oh, my reader, if you are trying to make yourself better, if you are going about to establish your own righteousness, thinking to commend yourself to God by anything of your own, may you now see the folly of it, and solemnly feel the truth that you are a lost sinner in the sight of God! Do not any longer be content to

form one of the religious crowd around us, the church-going, chapel-going multitude, who pass by repentance and the new birth, and yet presume to take Christian ground; but may you turn to the Lord Jesus, who is exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins.

It appears from the Scripture record, that this woman, in her sad condition, heard of one who could cure her.

She had heard of Jesus {Mark 5:27}

-- she heard that He could do what men could not do.

What blessed intelligence for a poor disconsolate soul! How welcome were the tidings! She felt her plague; she had proved the failing of every human prescription; she had

spent all {Mark 5:26},

and was worse than ever. Now how did she treat the report? Did she *hear*, and not *act*? No. She *came* to Jesus. Oh, yes; the Spirit of God leads the soul straight to Jesus. He reveals to the sin-stricken soul Jesus crucified as a present and an eternal salvation. The woman was thoroughly convinced that Jesus, and Jesus only, could heal her. It was not the venerable Jairus, nor even ordained apostles, that she felt she needed; only JESUS, for she knew that He could heal her, and He only. Her faith beheld Him in the midst of the vast crowd, like an overflowing fountain of living water, and she felt she must drink or die. She said within herself,

If I may *touch* but His clothes, I shall be whole {Mark 5:28}.

She was sure there was virtue in Jesus, and that it flowed freely to the touch of faith, and have it she must. Her necessity was most urgent and imperative. Neither the press of people, nor anything else, could hinder her making her way through the crowd, till she touched His garment, and had the healing virtue. She knew Christ as the *giver*, And she came simply as a needy *receiver* -- she *touched* His garment. How blessed is this sample of faith! What discrimination was wrought in her soul, by the Spirit of God, between crowding around Jesus, and the touch of faith! Now, mark the result. She *felt* that she was healed of that plague.

Before we proceed further, let us seek to apply this. We tell you, dear reader, of Jesus the Son of God, who came into the world to save sinners. We present to you *His death* as the Sin-bearer upon the tree; for

He died the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God
{see 1 Pet. 3:18}.

We testify of His blood; for the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin. Dear reader, Jesus only can save *you* from the wrath to come, and He can save to the uttermost. All Scripture points thus to Jesus. God the Father draws sinners to Jesus. Jesus Himself says to the heavy laden sinner,

Come unto *me*, . . . and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

The Holy Spirit leads the convicted sinner to Jesus. The gospel declares there is salvation in no other. Your state as a sinner is incurably bad. You are lost. You now *hear of* Jesus, that blessed Savior who came to seek and to save the lost. God commands this good news to be published. How do you treat this blessed report? Do *you* come to Jesus to *save you*! You have just seen that many crowded around Jesus, but only the touch of faith got virtue out of Him. It is not merely hearing of Jesus, or reading about Jesus, or

talking about Jesus, that will save you. No; those taught of the Spirit of God know that they must perish for ever, except they come to Jesus to be cleansed by His precious blood. Oh, my reader, Jesus delighteth in mercy! Though He sits on heaven's throne, His eye discerns your inmost thoughts, and His ear can welcome the feeblest cry. He knows how thoroughly sinful you are, and still He says,

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37}.

Be assured that He will not be indifferent to your case, if you desire His salvation. The Father will run to meet you when you are a great way off, and then you will feel happier than you ever did before. You will know Jesus as the One who put away your sins, by the blood of His cross, who was brought again from the dead by the blood of the everlasting covenant, and who entered into heaven itself by His own blood. Be assured, dear reader, that as soon as your troubled, sin-sick soul looks to the atoning death of Jesus, believing God's testimony to the value of that blood, you will *feel* whole of your plague; for you will see that Jesus bare your sins, and put them away for ever, under the judgment of God, by His death upon the cross. You will then no longer dread the wrath of God, but will enjoy peace in His holy presence, and be able to sing

"He ransomed *me* from hell with blood,
And by His power *my* foes controlled;
He found *me* wandering far from God,
And brought *me* to His chosen fold."

2. CONSIDER THE WAY OF JESUS WITH THIS SINNER. It was a serious moment with the woman, as well as a precious occasion for the outflowing of the love of Him who was full of grace and truth. Jesus was on His way to the ruler's house, whose daughter was said to be

at the point of death {Mark 5:23}.

But the case of this *one* needy woman was such a weighty matter, that Jesus called the attention of the whole multitude to it. She came *behind* Him to touch His clothes; but with what gracious majesty did the blessed Lord turn Himself about in the press and say,

Who touched me? {Mark 5:31}.

It is blessed to contemplate these ways of the Lord. A sinner had proved the healing virtue of Jesus, and the attention of the whole crowd must be arrested, and the urgent journey must be interrupted for the moment, while the heart of this trembling one is established and comforted, and her Christ-glorifying testimony published.

Who touched my clothes? {Mark 5:30}

said the tender-hearted Jesus. Thus the believing sinner was singled out from among the thousands; for her soul must be farther taught the deep and everlasting intimacy with the Son of God, which she had by faith been brought into. She must be made to feel that her place is not now to be *behind* the Lord, but to stand *before* Him in perfect confidence and unclouded affection. Ah, my reader, when Jesus is made known, in the healing virtue of His blood, to any sin-sick soul, an eternal intimacy is begun, and Jesus will show, as He did this woman, something of the dignity and

blessing that His own grace has brought us into. He will make us know the things that are freely given to us of God. He will say,

Thou art mine {Isa. 43:1}.

I will never leave thee, &c. {Heb. 13:5}.

I will uphold and bless thee, &c. {see Isa. 41:10}

The needy woman had *secretly* come *behind* Jesus; but He will have her now stand *publicly before* Him. There must be dealing with Jesus, and learning the lessons of His healing grace in *secret*, before any can truly confess Him *before men*. Jesus *turned Himself about* in the press; His voice was heard by her; His loving eye singled her out among the crowd of thousands, and the woman fell down *before* Him, and with a grateful heart told Him all the truth

before all the people {Luke 8:47}.

With fear and trembling, I grant, as we all feel when we first leave the long-accustomed ranks of unbelief, and openly plant our feet beneath the earth-despised shelter of Immanuel's grace.

Oh, my reader, see what an important matter in the mind of heaven is the salvation of *one* soul! Jesus rejoices over *one* lost sheep when it is found! The Father runs to meet *one* returning prodigal! The Holy Spirit often seems to pass by crowds to comfort *one* poor brokenhearted soul! There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over *one* sinner that repenteth! How blessed this is!

But notice another thing. Jesus holds up before the multitude the faith of this one woman who had so honored Him. He receives her worship, confesses His acceptance of her, and proclaims the new and everlasting relationship subsisting between them. Jesus calls her

Daughter {Mark 5:34}.

This title showed her new relationship to God.

Ye are all the *children* of God by faith in Christ Jesus {Gal. 3:26}.

Beloved, *now* are we the *sons* of God {1 John 3:2}.

It is this that the Spirit of God now bears witness to in the consciences of believers.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the *children of God* {Rom. 8:16}.

Christian reader! do you know your sonship? It is not a mere honorary title, like many distinctions of this world, but a new and eternal relationship which God in Christ has brought us into.

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the *sons of God* {1 John 3:1}!

Yes; believers in Christ Jesus are sons by choice, by regeneration, and by adoption.

Jesus also told her that she was made whole, and that *by faith* --

Thy faith hath made thee whole {Mark 5:34}.

She had confessed the Lord

before all the people {Luke 8:47};

but that had not made her whole. It is important to see that it is not our tears, our sorrows, our reformations, or efforts of any kind that make us whole. No; it is Christ, and Christ alone. Scripture

always directs us to the blood of Christ for peace, and it also assures us that

whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins
{Acts 10:43}.

Jesus had made this woman *whole*. Virtue had gone out of Him. Jesus assured her that the healing was perfect -- she was *made whole*. Yes; Jesus is the Rock, and His work is perfect. He receives returning, sinful prodigals. He cleanses and justifies them by His blood, sends His Spirit into their hearts, and assures them they shall not come into condemnation, but that they *have passed* from death unto life.

The last words of Jesus to the woman are very emphatic --

Go in peace {Mark 5:34}.

The first is a remarkable word -- "Go." I often think of it. Some persons never seem to learn its force in their experience. They may be sincere believers, but they are always hanging about Christ with doubts, not knowing forgiveness of sins and present peace; they are constantly asking to be made whole, hoping to be pardoned, &c., when Christ says to them, You *are* forgiven: "Go." They do not credit the glorious truth of *present* forgiveness and liberty of sonship; they are, therefore, in bondage and fear. Jesus would have it otherwise. He says,

Thy faith hath SAVED thee; go in peace???{Luke 7:50}!

As much as to say, Have no more doubts, fears, or misgivings; you are made whole, pardoned, reconciled, a child of God, a sinner saved.

Go in peace.

Dear reader, if you are a believer in the Lord Jesus, take your right place *before God* and *before men* as *saved*! Wherever you go, go in *peace* as to your salvation, knowing that Christ has removed your transgressions *from you* as far as the east is from the west; and your sins and iniquities, *God says, He will remember no more*.

Perhaps one of my readers may be saying, "Am I pardoned?" "Are my sins forgiven?" Important questions indeed. Be persuaded, my friend, and take your right place before God as a guilty sinner; turn away from every other refuge, and come straight to Jesus, and to Jesus only, for *salvation*. Trust only in His death. Behold Him bearing sin in His own body on the tree, and the fierce wrath of Jehovah poured out upon His Son, because of the sins that were laid upon Him. Then hear God's testimony:

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,
that *whosoever believeth in Him* should not perish, but have
everlasting life {John 3:16}.

Believing God's record of the value of the cross of Christ for your salvation, He warrants your saying, "*I am* God's child. Jesus hath atoned for *my* sins; with His stripes *I am* healed."

Oh, my reader! what will become of *you* if you die without Christ? Is it not written,

He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath
of God abideth on him {John 3:36}?

Oh, think of this, I earnestly beseech you! You are full of sin. You *now* hear of Jesus as the only Savior of sinners. How do you treat Him? Do you come to Him to save you, or do you despise Him?

Remember that when the woman in the crowd *heard* of Jesus, she *came* to Him to heal her, never rested till she touched Him, and you have read the happy result. Woe, woe unto you, if you neglect this great salvation! How can you escape the eternal torment of the damned, if you continue to set at nought God's gospel? Oh, poor sinner! didst thou but feel thy guilt and danger, how wouldst thou flee to the outstretched arms of the loving Jesus, and long to feel the cleansing virtue of His blood!

"Fly, then, awakened sinner, fly!
Your case admits no stay;
The fountain's opened now for sin --
Come, wash your guilt away.

"Only by faith in Jesu's blood
The sinner gets release;
No other sacrifice for sin
Will God accept but this."

Gospel Liberty

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”
(Gal. 5:1).

Those addressed in this epistle had known the liberty of the gospel. A person must first have tasted liberty before he can truly be exhorted to

stand fast

in it. You could not say to a poor slave working in chains, Stand fast in liberty. No; he must first be set free. So it is spiritually. Many do not know gospel liberty. Some are so accustomed to the slavery of sin, that they are not conscious of the real bondage they are in; others have, more or less, a feeling sense of the miserable condition of their hearts and ways, and long for deliverance from guilt and fear. Other persons seem only to think of liberty and independence in relation to their fellow-men. Perhaps they have striven for it, and have in some measure realized it; but they know nothing of the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Son of God came down from heaven to make men free. He preached liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. He gave His life a ransom for many.

It is delightful to see Paul's disinterested, Christ-like love and care for these Galatian saints. When first he went and preached among them, they received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus; they felt great blessing through his ministrations, and loved him so much, that if it had been possible, they would have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him. They were happy in the Lord. To them Christ was all. But after Paul left, false teachers came in among them -- persons who cared not for the people's souls, but only to propagate certain points of erroneous doctrine. The Galatian converts received them, and were so injured that they counted Paul their enemy. But how did Paul treat them? Did he return evil for evil? No. Like his blessed Master, he only sought their welfare, and cared very little what they thought of him, provided they thought well of Christ. He therefore presented Christ to them in the richest and most attractive way, so that they might be brought to be happy again in the knowledge and enjoyment of Christ's finished work. Most blessed is it to consider that

salvation is of the Lord {Jonah 2:9},

and that God's *only* way of meeting man in blessing is by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. We may well pity those who are seeking satisfaction from creature-streams, instead of the Creator's fulness; or who may be endeavouring to get into favour with God by any other way than by receiving His amazing mercy to sinners in the death of His beloved Son. God's gracious testimony to man is,

I will have mercy, and not sacrifice {Matt. 9:13};

thus plainly teaching us that the only way by which He can make man happy, and deliver him from eternal condemnation, is by compassionating him in his helplessness and sins, and providing a full and everlasting salvation for him, without money and without

price. This, known in the soul, is liberty. This is what the Spirit of God bears witness to; and

where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty {2 Cor. 3:17}.

This alone gives confidence and substantial comfort. It flows from God to the sinner.

God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us {Rom. 5:8}.

It is man, sinful man, God so loves.

Man's condition before God is that of a sinner --

all have sinned {Rom. 3:23}.

He is a slave of Satan, a servant of sin, a breaker of God's laws, afraid of death; he knows nothing of the holy presence of God, and trembles at the sound of the Lord's return from heaven. Such are we all by nature. In this fallen condition God's pitying eye beheld us, His compassionate heart moved toward us; and knowing that His own Son, sent forth in the likeness of sinful flesh, and making atonement by the death of the cross, was the only way of redeeming man, and bringing him into liberty and blessing, in richest mercy this unspeakable gift was not withheld. God gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Thus Christ went down into the sorrows and death of the cross to exalt sinful man to the heights of eternal glory.

Let us now look into the nature of the liberty the apostle here refers to, when he exhorts the Galatian saints to

stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free {Gal. 5:1}.

And I think we shall find that Christ has procured liberty from the slavery of Satan, from the guilt and dominion of sin, from the bondage and curse of the law, from the fear of death, and given us liberty in God's presence, the liberty of sonship, and liberty to serve.

1. LIBERTY FROM THE SLAVERY OF SATAN. It is a very humiliating thought, that man is really the slave of Satan; but is it not an undeniable fact, that we are the servants of those to whom we render obedience? Who, then, does man obey? Does he obey God? Certainly not; for the testimony of an inspired prophet is,

All we like sheep have gone astray {Isa. 53:6};

and the testimony of the Holy Ghost by an apostle is,

There is NONE that doeth good, no, not one -- they are ALL gone out of the way -- there is NONE that seeketh after God, &c. {Rom. 3:11, 12}.

Who, then, does the natural man obey? Is it not the prince of this world, who is also called the god of this world? Saddening thought! but, alas! too true;

for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world {1 John 2:16}.

The changeable fashions, the fascinating pleasures, and carnal gratifications of the day, in whatever garb they may be clothed, are of the world, and therefore in direct connection with the deceiver of the world, the adversary of souls -- the wicked one, in whom the whole world lieth. The lusts and passions of fallen man easily submit to his subtle suggestions, and those who yield often find *present* sensual recompence. But this arch-enemy deceives and blinds, lest the glorious gospel should shine into their hearts. Jesus, however, came to destroy the works of the devil, to free men from this vile service, to redeem His people from all iniquity, to ransom them from the power of the grave, to destroy death, and him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil. Man had fallen into allegiance to Satan, and he was fast bound by his chains; but a stronger than Satan came to his help; the Almighty Savior came forth from the Father to his rescue, and by His death, and resurrection from the dead, He led captivity captive, and triumphed over principalities and powers. Thus Christ, by one offering, which He once offered, ransomed His people. As nothing less than His precious blood could redeem them from the dreadful bondage they were in, Jesus paid that amazing price for them. All who believe in His name are made free. Christ has procured their liberty from the slavery of Satan. They now love and serve Him.

2. LIBERTY FROM THE GUILT AND DOMINION OF SIN. Some people say, they are thankful that they never felt a *guilty conscience*; but I pity such. It is the clearest proof of their being still in their sins. I thank God that I have felt the plague of a guilty conscience, dreadful as the experience of it was; but I can also say that I have a *cleansed conscience* by the blood of Christ. How can any one know pardon and peace, who never felt condemnation and guilt? The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. Why do not persons feel guilt? Because they do not consider what they are in God's sight. They have, therefore, wrong thoughts about sin. They say that many things are not sin which really are. They do not believe that, from the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is *no soundness*, and that there is none that doeth good, *no, not one*; but whatever be man's thought of himself, the Divine sentence has gone forth, that all the world stand

guilty before God {Rom. 3:19}.

Now, Jesus came to give us deliverance from this dreadful guilt, and this He did by the death of the cross. *There* God made Him to be sin for us; our old man was crucified with Him; *there* our iniquities were laid upon Him; He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; *there* all the waves and billows of Jehovah's wrath passed over Him; thus Christ, by the infinite efficacy of His one sacrifice, hath freed us from the guilt of sin. Not only have our sins been judged on Him on the tree, but

our old man {Rom. 6:6}

too -- the nature that did the sins -- the corrupt tree, as well as its fruits.

Thus, through Christ, we have power over sin. Before a sinner has beheld the Lamb of God slain on Calvary, sin has dominion over him. He makes resolutions; but he breaks them again and again. He reforms outwardly in various ways; but he only exchanges one class of sins for another. He is without strength. He cannot live without sinning. But when his guilty conscience is brought by the Holy Spirit before the cross of Christ, his heart melts, the thorns and briers of self-righteousness are burned up, his icy affections thaw before the burning love of Immanuel, and he is humbled before God, broken down under a sense of His love. By considering the deep agonies of the Sin-bearer, he hates sin, he loathes himself, loves the Savior, and cries out, with gratitude of soul --

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my heart, my life, my all!"

Thus, by faith in the Son of God, who died for the ungodly, we have liberty from the dominion of sin; and the Divine assurance is,

Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace {Rom. 6:14}.

3. LIBERTY FROM THE BONDAGE AND CURSE OF THE LAW. The law of Moses is described by Peter as a yoke of bondage, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. It made righteous and holy demands on fallen, helpless sinners. It gave no liberty, but the spirit of fear and bondage. It was the ministration of condemnation and death. There was remembrance of sin, but no remission. Man needs power, and he needs life; then obedience readily flows into its proper channel. Jesus by His death bore the curse of a broken law, and *put away* sin; hence the gospel proclaims full forgiveness; and the testimony of God *now* is,

Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 10:17}.

By Christ all that believe *are* justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses {see Acts 13:39}.

This is liberty indeed! But who could attentively contemplate God's law without being conscious of having broken it, of having come short of His holy standard, and therefore of being under the *curse*? for it is written,

Cursed is every one that continueth not *in all things* which are written in the book of the law to do them {Gal. 3:10}.

Who can bear to weigh himself in this balance? This makes it clear that *all* are under sin. Hence the apostle declares, that

as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse {Gal. 3:10}.

We have *all*, then, merited God's curse by breaking His law; but Jesus, the Redeemer, came forth and rescued us:

Christ *hath redeemed us from the curse of the law*, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree {Gal. 3:13}.

Thus we have full liberty and redemption from the bondage and curse of the law by the cross of Christ.

"The law proclaims no terror now,
And Sinai's thunders roar no more;
From all His wounds new blessings flow,

A sea of joy without a shore."

4. LIBERTY FROM THE FEAR OF DEATH. Man trembles at death; his bones shake, the joints of his back are loosed, and his countenance becomes ghastly, when he sees death enter the room, and feels its chilly grasp. There is only one thing that enables the soul to triumph in death; it is knowing that Christ died for our sins, and that He who is now in the glory is our life. It is only beholding Christ who was on the cross that will enable any one to say, that death is but the opening of the golden gates that admit him into the celestial glory. Nothing can remove the fear of death, and enable us to meet it with composure and peace, but the sheltering power of the blood of the Lamb, the blessed knowledge that we *have* passed from death unto life, and the assurance, that though the mortal body may fall asleep in Jesus, death can have no claim upon us, because Jesus hath borne death and judgment *instead* of us. So that the true language of faith is,

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law;
but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our
Lord Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 15:55-57}.

Thus we have liberty from the fear of death.

5. LIBERTY IN GOD'S PRESENCE. So perfectly have
our old man {Rom. 6:6}

and all our transgressions been judged by God on His beloved Son on the cross, and so completely are we made the righteousness of God in Him risen and ascended, that the believer is enabled, with holy boldness, to draw near to God in the happy liberty of acceptance and favour in His presence. He is now made nigh. Oh, it is wonderful how near to God the believer is brought in Christ Jesus, and by His blood! As near to God as Christ is, because he is *in Him*. He is invited to come boldly to the throne of grace, both for pity and help, because Christ's all-cleansing blood and His all-prevailing priesthood ever speak there for him. But I must pass on to notice --

6. LIBERTY OF SONSHIP. The Spirit of adoption is one of the most blessed privileges of this dispensation. It seemed necessary that Christ should die before the blessed liberty of sonship could be enjoyed.

When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we *might receive the adoption of sons*. And *because ye are sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father {Gal. 4:4-6}.

Thus we see that it is through the death of Christ we are brought into the blessed standing of sons. We realize and enjoy this precious truth by faith.

Ye are all the *children of God by faith* in Christ Jesus {Gal. 3:26}.

It is a blessing of the highest possible dignity, and is our *present* portion.

Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God {1 John 3:2}.

It is when this truth is known with power in the soul that we are enabled to serve our heavenly Father acceptably. It will not be

from *slavish fear*, like the spirit of bondage under the law; but it will be with reverence and *filial fear*, lest we grieve the heart of our gracious Father. How blessed is this liberty! How full of comfort! How rich in goodness *now*! How sweet the *prospect* of standing for ever before the Father in love, as the objects of His choice, adoption, and grace!

7. LIBERTY OF SERVICE. The believer is a servant, because he is a son; and the Lord's service is perfect freedom --

His yoke is easy, and His burden is light {see Matt. 11:30}.

He serves God as a redeemed sinner and an adopted child, constrained by the love of Christ. He works not for liberty, but as *having* liberty; not *for* life, but *from* life. This is happy service; it flows from a cheerful heart; it is wrought by a willing spirit; and is often accompanied with present recompence. There are no cares, no burdens, connected with such service; it aims only at one object, namely, to exalt Him who ransomed us with His own blood; and we know that His blood purges our conscience from dead works to *serve* the living God, and to wait for His Son from heaven.

But more than all this. We have liberty to trust in Him at all times; to cast all our care upon Him; to rejoice in the Lord alway; and to pray without ceasing. We can sit by faith at His pierced feet; we can there seek instruction, and hear His word, in the blessed consciousness that those feet at which we sit tell us of atonement made, and the captive soul set free. We may lean upon His arm, while passing through the wilderness, in the happy remembrance that it was once willingly stretched out for us on Calvary's cross -- once bound to that accursed tree, to make us eternally free. We can rest our way-worn hearts by faith upon His wounded bosom, in the sweetest assurance that from His side flowed blood and water -- the blessed and certain testimony of the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and of the perfect love and favour of our unchanging God.

As I have said before, all do not enjoy this liberty in their souls; but it is, nevertheless, the privilege of those who believe in the Lord Jesus for salvation, because it is based on what has been already accomplished; it is liberty wherewith Christ *hath* made us free. The doubting, trembling soul, therefore, need only look to the cross of Christ, and heartily receive God's own account of the value of that work, to be happy. Is there a question in any soul about sin? -- the only remedy is the death of Christ. If a sense of having broken God's law oppress the heart, look at the redeeming work of His beloved Son. If the fear of death fetter any spirit, the only delivering power is the death of Jesus on the cross. If the soul feel at a distance from God, the only way of returning to His presence is by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. If a sluggish feeling seem to hinder our going forward in service, the value of the sacrifice of Christ, apprehended by faith, revives and strengthens. If darkness becloud the mind, and a sense of sin lie upon the conscience, communion and peace are restored by confession, and believing what God says about the blood.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness {1 John 1:9};

and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin {1 John 1:9}.

Dear Christian reader, what say you to these things? Can you rejoice in this blessed liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free? or are you fearing, and doubting, and trembling as to your eternal prospects? If so, why is it? Have you not long ago renounced all thoughts of creature righteousness? Have you not long felt that you are a vile sinner before God? Do you not often groan over your uncleanness? Have you not fled to Christ alone for salvation? Do you not renounce every other ground of acceptance but in Christ? And do you not trust wholly in his blood? Then why are you fearful, seeing it is such that Christ hath made free? Oh! look away from yourself, and every other object, to Christ crucified, risen, and ascended; believe that He hath done what God declares He has, and be assured that it is because the Spirit hath quickened you that you have been convinced of sin, and been brought as a guilty, needy one to the Savior. Be comforted, then, dear trembling child of God, for it is because the Lord hath loved you with an everlasting love, that with loving-kindness He hath drawn you to Himself through Christ; and the testimony of His word is, that *your sins are forgiven, you are justified from all things, you shall not come into condemnation, you have everlasting life -- you have passed from death unto life; Christ is your righteousness and life; He ever lives to make intercession for you; and He bids you to be of good cheer, and to go in peace. Rest, then, in God's faithfulness to His own word; for*

He cannot deny Himself {2 Tim. 2:13}.

May the Holy Spirit take of these precious things of Christ, and reveal them for much blessing and comfort to your soul.

It is in this

liberty

that the Christian is exhorted to

stand fast,

and to beware of slipping from it into any

yoke of bondage {Gal. 5:1}.

There are many fascinating temptations presented by the adversary to induce us to yield, but we must

stand fast.

Our present peace and strength for the Lord's service are connected with our standing fast in this liberty. Abiding in Him, we shall be strong -- strong in faith; giving glory to God; strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Oh, for more of the power and communion of the Holy Ghost, to enable us to

stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free {Gal. 5:1}!

Then the language of every heart will be --

"My comfort, my rejoicing, all shall be,

Christ died and rose! He died and rose for me!

He lives for me! for me He pleads above!

I'm lost in wonder at Immanuel's love!"

But perhaps my reader is a stranger to these precious things of Christ. *You* are serving Satan by *your sins*, little thinking it is so, because his service is connected with self-indulgence -- he allows

you to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and that is a sweet morsel to you. But do you ever think that *you* must give an account of yourself to God? Have you ever considered, that because *you* are God's creature, He is justly entitled to all *your* heart, and mind, and strength? Do *you* not sometimes feel pangs of conscience, telling you that all is not right? Do not thoughts of death and judgment terrify *you*? Does it never occur to you, that the Son of God came down from heaven, and in wondrous love died for such as *you* are? Have *you* not heard again and again that there is salvation in no other name -- that He is the only door of escape from wrath -- the only way of admission into glory? Then, will you still be careless, still love sin, still choose darkness rather than light, still prefer the bondage of Satan to the liberty of the gospel, still rush onward to the glittering sword of the fiery judgment of the Son of man? Oh, my reader, turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die? The gospel yet proclaims liberty for the captives; cleansing for the vilest, blackest sinner; righteousness for the most profligate and filthy; acceptance and favour with God for the greatest rebel; yea, for *whosoever* receives Jesus, the Savior whom God hath sent! Can *you* any longer refuse the blessed tidings? Can *you*, will you go on in hardness of heart against such unheard-of love? Will you be deaf to the cries, and groans, and agonies of Christ? Will you still refuse to lift up your eyes to Calvary's cross, and read in Christ's death God's love to sinners? Doth your proud heart yet say, I will not have Christ Jesus to reign over me? Or do you begin to think of the value of your soul, and that it is high time to flee from the wrath to come? Oh, that the Spirit of God might graciously fasten these eternally important thoughts upon your conscience, so that the sincere cry of your heart may be --

"Just as I am -- without one plea,

But that Thy blood was shed for me;

And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,

O Lamb of God, I come!

"Just as I am -- and waiting not

To rid my soul of one dark blot;

To Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot,

O Lamb of God, I come!"

Faith and Unbelief

And she said, Behold, thy sister-in-law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister-in-law. And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God (Ruth 1:15, 16).

To whatever part of the Bible we turn, we find, when under the Spirit's teaching, great gospel truths brought before us. It seems as if salvation by grace were stamped on every page, and the Lord Jesus Christ continually presented to us as the Savior of lost, undone sinners. In the New Testament these truths are plainly brought out; but in the Old Testament Scriptures they commonly come before us in the form of types and shadows.

The book of Ruth has been valued by many Christians as containing typical instruction of a *dispensational* character. The book of Genesis so abounds with this kind of teaching, that it may be called a table of contents of the whole Bible. In the little book of Ruth, however, we find God's dispensational ways glanced at, and though so briefly, all are preserved in strictest keeping with the divine order. It opens with an account of the people of Israel scattered among the Gentiles, because the Lord in judgment had brought famine on their land; after a while, we find that God so blesses His people again, that Naomi (a sample of the Jewish remnant) returns to her own country, and finds it again the scene of the goodness and mercy of Jehovah; and the book concludes by showing us Naomi, who had so keenly felt her past

bitterness {see Ruth 1:20},

both comforted and nourished. But it is important to notice, that between the scattering of these Israelites, and their subsequent restoration and blessing, a poor outcast sinner of the Gentiles hears of the goodness of the God of Israel, believes the report, confesses her attachment to the Lord God of Israel, and ultimately becomes the wife of the gracious and wealthy Boaz, who alone had the right to redeem; and then, and not till then, the heart of the returned Israelite is made to rejoice. All this is plain to those who have prayerfully meditated on the prophetic Scriptures.

And where, I would ask, are the Jews now? Are they not scattered among the Gentiles, their city lying in heaps, and their land in a state of poverty and darkness? as the apostle saith, they are

broken off because of unbelief (see Rom. 11:20).

They will, however, yet be restored to their own land; they will be grafted in again to their own olive tree; they will have the spirit of grace and supplication poured out upon them; and

they shall look upon Him whom they pierced {John 19:37},

be brought into the blessings of the new covenant, and filled with joy and gladness; but not till the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, not till the calling out of the Church by the gospel testimony is accomplished, and the Lord Himself descends from heaven to meet her, and take her to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Now, I say, Israel as a nation is for the time under God's judgment, because of their sin (save as one and another, according to the

election of grace, now receives the Savior); and God is preaching the gospel of forgiveness of sins to every creature, and

calling out of the Gentiles a people for His name {see Acts 15:14}.

The blessed proclamation, that there is bread enough and to spare in the Father's house for poor returning prodigals, is now being sent forth; the glorious testimony of

the living bread which came down from heaven {John 6:51}

is

preached unto the Gentiles {1 Tim. 3:16};

and in a little while the Lord will come again to receive His Church unto Himself. After this, the nation of Israel's joy will be realized; for the Scripture saith,

There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob {Rom. 11:26}.

Then

Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the whole earth with fruit {Isa. 27:6}.

Having thus briefly looked at the general features of the book of Ruth, let us now consider the instruction contained in the verses before us.

1st. Let us contemplate the moral condition of this woman, who was afterwards brought into such honor and blessing;

2nd. The report she heard;

3rd. The effect of the report; and,

4th. The warning presented to us in the case of Orpah her sister.

1. RUTH'S MORAL CONDITION. She was a sinner of the Gentiles, outside the privileges of the favoured nation of Israel, far off from God, an idolater; her origin and birth loathsome in the extreme, a Moabite, concerning whom the law of Moses declared, that one

shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation {Deut. 23:3}.

She was, therefore, without God, and without hope in the world. We also are fallen in Adam, Gentiles, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, far off, not having the privileges of Jews, all by nature children of wrath; we have no claim whatever upon God; we deserve only His righteous condemnation, because we have rebelled against Him, and transgressed against His holy laws. Such is our condition. But the mercy is, that God -- while His ancient people (the Jews) are scattered in unbelief -- is now calling us Gentiles who believe to Himself, and giving us pardon and peace through the atoning blood of His beloved Son.

2. THE REPORT. While Ruth was in this sinful condition, in the far off country of the Moabites, she heard the good report,

that Jehovah had visited His people in giving them bread
(Ruth 1:6).

This report she believed; and it was this testimony of the goodness and mercy of the God of Israel that won her heart, and animated her whole soul. And, beloved reader, what is the report now? Is it not that God has sent His Son to be the Savior of the lost? Is it not that He has provided

living bread {John 6:51}

for poor, dying, perishing sinners? Is it not that God, in pure, wondrous love, delivered up His own Son to the death of the cross, that sinners might be saved from the wrath to come? Is it not that by Christ crucified sin is for ever put away, and Christ Himself the righteousness of every sinner that believes in the Lord Jesus? Yes, every sinner, however vile and unclean -- even Jerusalem sinners, and Moabitish sinners -- *whosoever* believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. Our Lord Jesus Himself said,

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if *any man eat* of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world {John 6:51}.

What a glorious report to reach the ears of broken-hearted and heavy-laden sinners! What blessed news! How kind and full of love is God, who, instead of banishing us all from His presence because of our transgressions, has sent His only-begotten Son to die that we might live; and having raised Him from the dead, because He had accomplished the work of eternal redemption, now commands this blessed report to be proclaimed to every creature. But who believes? Ah! well might the prophet exclaim,

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? {Isa. 53:1}.

3. THE EFFECTS OF THIS REPORT. When the gospel is received into the heart by faith, it always leads the soul to God, because it reveals God's love to us. It is indeed the gospel of the *grace* of God. It unfolds His glorious attributes; shows forth His gracious character; testifies of His love and mercy to lost sinners; and proclaims life and pardon to the dead in trespasses and sins. When the heart has been opened by the Holy Ghost to receive this good report, it at once attracts the soul to God, and produces confidence in Him. A thorough change of mind thus takes place, so that God is no longer judged to be a hard master, and an austere man; but He is seen to be most gracious and merciful, full of love and compassion, and abundant in goodness and truth. Thus it was with Ruth. The good report, that

Jehovah had visited His people in giving them bread
{Ruth 1:6},

at once enabled her to turn from idols to serve the living and true God. So truly, so decidedly, was her heart attracted to the Lord God of Israel, that when her sister turned back, and she was earnestly besought to take the same course, her unhesitating and steadfast response was,

Intreat me not to leave thee . . . for thy God shall be my God
{Ruth 1:16}.

This is a very important point to contemplate, for the human mind may be in a certain way exercised about religion and religious things, short of a spiritual birth; but unless the glory of God be seen in the face of Jesus Christ, unless God's character be known as the sinner's Savior, there can be no sincere turning to God, no confidence in Him, no power to walk in the truth for His glory. But when the death of Christ is beheld by faith, as God's provision for dying, guilty, helpless sinners, and preached to every creature by the Savior's own command; when the sin-burdened conscience hears the Most High God saying,

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool {Isa. 1:18};

then the soul finds rest in the bosom of God Himself as a sin-hating and yet a sin-pardoning God. The love of God is now shed abroad in the heart; our faith and hope are in God;

we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ
{Rom. 5:1};

we love Him, because He first loved us {1 John 4:19};

and the happy soul exclaims

"How can I sink with such a prop
As the Eternal God,
Who bears the earth's huge pillars up,
And spreads the heavens abroad?"

"How can I die while Jesus lives,
Who rose and left the dead?
Pardon and life my soul receives
From mine exalted Head."

But this is not the only effect of believing the good report. Ruth also said,

Thy people shall be my people {Ruth 1:16}.

So it is with souls now who are born of God. They love the Bible, because it is God's word; they love holiness, because it is God's way; and they love all Christians, because they are objects of God's love. Many believers have found, in times of sore temptation, the greatest comfort in that inspired declaration,

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren {1 John 3:14}.

It is impossible to be a child of God without loving His people.

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? . . . and every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him {1 John 4:20, 5:1}.

This is very plain. In the subsequent history of Ruth, we always find her in association and companionship with the people of the Lord. The God of Israel was her God, and His people her people. Sometimes we see her gleaning in the kinsman-redeemer's field; at another time we find her eating and drinking with his servants; but we never find her going back to the gods and people of the Moabites.

Another point to be noticed in this narrative, as an effect of the good report, is that she *proved* in her experience the *reality* of it. She not only credited the statement that God had visited His

people with bread, but she *ate* of it, and was sufficed. Dry doctrines, however true, can only feed the intellect; but the sinner that is compelled to cry out,

I perish with hunger {Luke 15:17},

feels that he *must eat* living bread, he *must feed* upon Christ for his own soul's necessities, he *must come* to the Savior for salvation, he can be satisfied with nothing else. This is what all true believers experience. The gospel, as we have seen, brings the sinner, through Christ, to God. He not only hears God's blessed testimony to the death of Jesus, but he *looks* there for salvation and *lives*; he *eats*, for his own eternal blessing, by faith, the flesh and blood of the Son of God, as that which fully meets his own soul's need, and has also fully met all God's just claims on the sinner's behalf. He *eats* and is sufficed. He realizes the flesh of the Son of man to be

living bread {John 6:51},

and views with eternal importance those words of Jesus --

Except ye *eat* the flesh of the Son of man, and *drink* His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed {John 6:53-55}.

Yes, those who really receive the gospel which God hath sent feel that they do not embrace mere sentiments, or a formal set of religious views; but they renounce every other refuge, and trust in the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus from absolute necessity. As a man just aroused from sleep flees from a house enveloped in flames of fire, as a starving man eagerly devours a piece of bread, or as a sinking man cleaves to a life-boat, so every true believer gratefully welcomes the crucified and risen Savior as the *only* hope set before him in the gospel. The language of his heart is --

"Save me, Christ, or else I die!
None but Christ can satisfy,
None but Christ to me be given,
None but Christ on earth or heaven."

We might also notice other points in the experience of this faithful woman, which correspond with the experience of the household of faith in all ages, such as having all her needs supplied, being enabled to minister bread to others after she herself had been sufficed, finding increasing blessing as she went on her way, happy communion with her gracious, wealthy benefactor and his servants, the soul-humbling effects of grace, &c.; but I pass on to notice that her pilgrimage was terminated, and her hope consummated by her marriage with the mighty man of Israel, her redeemer. And what is the Church's hope now? Is it not to see Jesus, to be with Him and like Him for ever? Are we not expecting to be the bride of the Lamb? and has not that blessed Redeemer, who hath sustained, and comforted, and fed us so often upon His own flesh and blood, said,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3}?

Yes, Christ Himself is the believer's hope. Nothing short of seeing Christ, and being with Him, and like Him, can satisfy the desires of truly regenerated souls. The apostle Paul says on this subject,

We look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His own glorious body {Phil. 3:20, 21};

and again,

Looking for that *blessed hope*, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, &c. {Titus 2:13, 14}.

Peter says,

Be diligent, that ye may *be found of Him* in peace, without spot and blameless {2 Pet. 3:14};

and John also, by the same Spirit, writes,

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath *this hope in Him* purifieth himself, even as He is pure {1 John 3:2, 3}.

The next great event, then, that the Scripture points to, is the Lord's return from heaven; and the true hope of the Church is for the Bridegroom to come, and take those who are ready with Him to the marriage. Oh, dear children of God! What are we really looking for? What is our expectation? Are we looking for Christ, and loving His appearing? for

unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation {Heb. 9:28}.

Christ is all to the believer. It is Christ who is his life, righteousness, and peace; and his true expectation is to reign with Christ, and share His honor and glory. And we may be sure that the heart of Jesus now looks forward to that time with inconceivable delight.

Father,
said He,

I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory {John 17:24}.

If the question be asked, When will Jesus come? we reply, We know not. We are told to watch; for we know not when the time is. *Now*, it behoves us to love and serve Him, to walk in His ways,

not to glean in another field {Ruth 2:8}.

Soon our pilgrimage will be over, our opportunities of confessing a rejected Savior in an evil world will have passed away, and then we shall be for ever with the Lord. What a glorious prospect! What fulness of unmingled joy! What perfect rest and satisfaction then! Oh, that we may all be so in love with our Savior, that our constant, hearty response to His

Behold, I come quickly {Rev. 22:12}!

may be,

Even so: come, Lord Jesus {Rev. 22:20}!

4. THE WARNING. Orpah, too, heard the good report, and for the moment seemed to be influenced by it; but her *heart* was not impressed by the truth, her *conscience* was not exercised about the goodness of God in giving bread again to sinful Israel. Moved, however, by the example of others, she walked for a little while with them; but carnal reasoning and temptation soon overcame

her, and she returned to her Moabitish swine-trough again. She read not the lessons of love in the ways of Jehovah, she *felt* not the goodness of God which leadeth to repentance {see Rom. 2:4},

she perceived not that the people of the Lord had any claim upon her esteem and confidence over the accursed Moabites; in fact, she did not consider matters as they really were in God's sight; and she therefore followed her own will and inclination, and returned unto her *people*, and unto her *gods* {Ruth 1:15}.

This is very solemn; yet, it is to be feared, that the gospel message of reconciliation to God by the death of His Son meets with the same rejection by many now. They hear, and seem interested in religious people and things for a little while; but, when temptation comes, they go back again to their people and their gods. They hear, but *THEY BELIEVE NOT*; they do not receive the Word preached into an honest heart; their feelings are moved for the time, but they are not brought into exercise of conscience before God about their own state; their hearts therefore, after all, really cling to their people and their gods. In every nation the ungodly have their gods -- some darling objects of their hearts, and these vary too, according as circumstances change, and life advances; for that which engrosses the human heart at one period of life has little charm at another. There are household gods, and public gods, gods for youth, and gods for advanced age -- not always visible, I grant, but not the less real. The poor man has his gods, and the rich have their gods; for fallen man is naturally an idolater; his heart is alienated from God, and his lust and pride thirst for gratification; hence he rejoices in the works of his own hands, he worships and serves the creature more than the Creator. Such is man. Unless, therefore, an object be presented to him, beyond what his natural eye beholds, capable of meeting every craving of his soul, man still clings to his gods. It is, then, most blessed to see how completely the death of the Son of God meets man in his sins, and is capable of filling his soul with everlasting consolation and hope, of practically delivering from the

gods many

and the

lords many {1 Cor. 8:5}

of this present evil world, and of elevating his affections to things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

And now, dear reader, let me affectionately ask, How have *you* treated the gospel? What effect has the good report had upon *you*? Has the goodness of God led *you* to repentance, and to receive God's salvation through Christ? Have you so beheld the mercy of God in saving you from wrath through the death of His Son, that you are constrained to love God and His children? Or, are you clinging still to the pleasures of sin, and deceiving yourself with the vain hope that you will one day alter your course? Were *you* not once moved, when hearing of the love of God to sinful men in the cross of His beloved Son, to feel something of its solemn importance? Did you not resolve to walk with those who love the Savior in preference to your former companions? Then, why are you

gone back {Ruth 1:15}?

Why are you still living in sin with the enemies of Christ? My friend, beware of trifling with a matter which concerns your eternal welfare! It may, perhaps, be said of *you*,

This night thy soul shall be required of thee {Luke 12:20}.

Let me faithfully warn you! I have lately heard of the death of a young woman which I must relate. On a Friday morning the wretched girl in great distress cried out, "I know that I am deathstruck, and damned to all eternity; the devil has told me so, and that he will drag me to endless torments at six o'clock, to the pit prepared for me!" Her agonies were inexpressible and truly heart-rending, so that even her companions, whom she earnestly exhorted to repent and leave their wicked ways, were alarmed and much affected, yet knew not how to meet her need; they knew not Jesus, who is the source of every true comfort, as meeting the sinner's need; they knew not that *His blood cleanseth from all sin*. The poor, miserable girl, with screams of horror, exclaimed, "Can nothing save me? Is there no escape?" . . . She several times jumped out of bed screaming, and in the most dreadful manner exclaimed, "You shall not have me yet; it is not six o'clock." She continued raving thus till the hour she had so often named: the clock struck six, and she expired.

Reader! be assured that *you* are hastening on toward the fiery wrath of God, however pleasurable it may seem for the moment, unless you are brought, as a guilty sinner, to trust in His beloved Son.

The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ out Lord {Rom. 6:23}.

The Christian's Position and Hope

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:1-9).

“For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:9, 10).

By a Christian I mean a person who is
in Christ {Rom. 8:1};

not a mere nominal professor of Christianity as contrasted with a Mohammedan, an idolater, or a Jew; but a sinner who has received the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God sent, as his Savior. By being

in Christ

I do not refer to God's eternal purpose, but to the blessed reality of being regarded by God as now standing before Him in all the acceptability of His beloved Son. God's purpose before the world was, that all the saints of this present time should be

in Christ;

but, as Paul says,

we were in the flesh {Rom. 7:5},

we . . . were by nature children of wrath, even as others {Eph. 2:3};

and in the last of Romans he speaks of some being in Christ before him.

However men may classify the human family, Scripture now speaks of only two classes -- those who are

in Christ,

and those who are

in the flesh {Rom. 7:5}.

All are naturally in the flesh. They may be moral, virtuous, amiable, kind or the reverse, educated or uneducated, religious in their way or irreligious; but being only in their natural state, they are far from God.

To be carnally minded is death {Rom. 8:6}.

In Rom. 8:7 we are told that

the carnal mind

-- that is, the mind of man in his natural state --

is enmity against God;

quite contrary to and opposed to God. But, worse than this, it is lawless, and refuses to obey God --

is not subject to the law of God.

But worst of all, God says it is so bad that it cannot be subject -- neither indeed can be {Rom. 8:7}.

Thus the divine verdict as to the condition of every child of Adam is hopelessly bad. Hence God Himself does not propose to mend or improve man in the flesh, for He says it cannot be subject to Him; but He gives him life. Christ says,

I am come that they might have life {John 10:10}.

God creates us in Christ Jesus.

If any man be in Christ -- a new creation {see 2 Cor. 5:17}.

He gives us also the Holy Ghost to link us with Christ in the heavenlies. It is not true that God gives people His Spirit to help them in the flesh, or to improve the flesh; but having given those who believe in the Lord Jesus life, eternal life, and made them sons, He sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. It is a point of the highest importance in the present day, when man is so exalted, to see that God pronounces man in the flesh to be hopelessly and irremediably bad. It is God's verdict of the natural standing, which belongs to us all as

in Adam {1 Cor. 15:22}.

The whole nature is foul, utterly unclean, and incapable of being made fit for God's presence. The whole history of man from the fall shows that nothing can be worse. Judgments, commandments, ordinances, even the personal ministry of Christ Himself, failed to improve man in the flesh, and only brought out the evil of the heart. As to law, it is positively stated that

as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse {Gal. 3:10}.

There was, therefore, but one way in which God could deal with man in the flesh; namely, judgment unto death. This God has done in a Substitute, His only-begotten, well-beloved Son, for all who believe in His name. Jesus, who knew no sin, was made sin for us. We are also told in Rom. 8:3 --

What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, *condemned sin in the flesh.*

Thus we see that

sin in the flesh

has been condemned by God Himself in Christ crucified. It is also most blessedly true that Christ bare our sins, suffered for our actual transgressions, in His own body on the tree; but here it is rather the bad nature, what we were in the flesh. And, after all, this is the greatest plague of every true Christian. Many who have

enjoyed the blessed reality of forgiveness of sins are so troubled because of lusts, pride, inward feelings, and selfishness *within*, that the question with them often is, "Am I a Christian?" It is most blessed, therefore, to see that God has dealt with this *judicially* for us in the death of Jesus. Hence we react in Rom. 6:6:

Knowing this, that *our old man is crucified with Him*.

This is what God has done. It is an accomplished fact, whether we believe it or not, that God has judicially set aside our old man in the death of Jesus. So that, when contemplating Jesus in death upon the tree, we see how that God has not only dealt with Christ in judgment there for the transgressions we have committed against Him, but also that our old evil nature, our old man, is crucified with Him. Happy those who simply believe what God says about it. Paul did. It was, therefore, to him a blessed reality. He could say,

I am crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20);

and he could assert it also as a divine fact, that

they that are Christ's *have crucified the flesh* with the affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24).

It is quite true that God's children feel, and deeply feel, this evil nature; in fact, only those who are taught of God do; but accepting by faith the full value of what God has done for them in the death of His Son, they hearken to the divine injunction so to reckon (Rom. 6:11):

Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Is this the way, beloved friends, that we reckon? The truth is most important both for peace and walk. How could we who feel the evil workings *within* be at rest before God, unless we saw that He had dealt with it, and judicially set it aside in the death of Christ? When we have been sometimes ready to cry out,

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me (not who shall forgive my sins, but deliver me) *from the body of this death?* (Rom. 7:24)

we can surely then look up to God and say, "Thou hast delivered me from this old man by the death of Christ";

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7:25).

The believer is delivered from it by being dead to sin in Jesus his Substitute. Quite true that he still feels it; but he knows it to be a judged and condemned foe. He is therefore content to go on with these two natures, saying,

So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin (Rom. 7:25).

And he knows too something of the meaning of our Lord's words,

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit {John 3:6}.

As to *power* in walk and conflict, he cannot now trust self, cannot look there for resources; for he knows that in him -- that is, in the flesh -- dwells no good thing; he knows that he has died to sin; he therefore looks only to Christ risen and ascended for everything, and this is the great secret of spiritual *power*.

It is, then, most blessed to see how graciously God has delivered us, in righteousness, from "our old man," by the death

of Christ, and given us life in Him risen; thus are we freed from the standing in sin and death which we had when

we were in the flesh {Rom. 7:5}.

The way being now cleared, let us look a little more particularly at what Scripture teaches as to our position and hope.

In Rom. 8:9 God says,

Ye are not in the flesh,

and the first verse speaks of us as

in Christ Jesus {Rom. 8:1},

and the second verse of

life in Christ Jesus making us free from the law of sin and death {see Rom. 8:2}.

What a wonderful thing it is to be

free from sin {Rom. 6:18, 22} --

free from the law of sin and death {Rom. 8:2};

but how can it be otherwise if God regards us *now* as not in the flesh, but in Christ, who is at His own right hand? What an exalted position! Christ our life, our peace, our righteousness, yea, blessed with

all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ {Eph. 1:3}.

Can anything be plainer? We see by the death of Christ that our fleshly standing is gone, that before God we are not in the flesh, but that we have another life and standing

in Christ.

Well, then, might the apostle say,

The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me {Gal. 2:20}.

What a position the grace of God has brought us into! Could we be higher than in Christ risen and ascended? as the apostle expresses it in Ephesians, quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. All of God's rich and abundant mercy, the fruit of His own creative power:

For we are His workmanship, *created* in Christ Jesus unto good works {Eph. 2:10}.

All of grace and to the praise of His glory. We do not hope to be a new creation; for it is a present reality --

If any man be in Christ, a new creation {see 2 Cor. 5:17}.

A Christian, then, is not a man mended up in the flesh, but a person who has a new nature, has life in a risen Christ, is a new creation. He does not wait to die in order to have this; for he is now in Christ, created in Christ Jesus. It is quite true that He will not have the redemption of the body till Christ comes; but Scripture speaks of us now as

in Christ,

that Christ who is in the heavenlies is our life, that we are a new creation, filled to the full in Christ, fully blessed in Him--

Ye *are* complete in Him {Col. 2:10}.

What depths of divine grace, what everlasting consolation, what a source of joy and gladness, God thus sets before us!

Observe that in Col. 2:9 the person of Christ is most blessedly set before us. The man Christ Jesus is in heaven. The Nazarene is glorified --

crowned with glory and honour {Heb. 2:9}.

The man is there who once trod Jerusalem's streets, sat on Sychar's well, and wept tears of deepest sympathy with sorrowing ones at Bethany. But now He is in glory. When here He was God manifested in the flesh, and there He is no less God; for

in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily {Col. 2:9}.

And all this divine glory, shining brightly in the risen and ascended man, is brought to bear on the subject we are considering; for the next words are,

And ye are complete in Him {Col. 2:10}.

Where am I then? What is my position now before God? I am told it is

in Christ,

complete in Him,

in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily,

who is

the Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10}.

Can anything, I ask, exceed the dignity, the holy and exalted character, of the position God has given us in Christ? Could anything be added to warrant the heart's fullest confidence? Could we have more perfect security? or could anything else be wished to constrain us to devotedness of heart and life to Him who has so loved us? It is not future blessings we are now contemplating, but present possessions. Have we entered upon them? and are we living upon them as present realities? Some Christians seem like men who have been saved from drowning by a life-boat, and are fearing as to whether they will ever reach the land. They do not see their present standing in Christ. It is true that we are not yet bodily in heavenly places; but it is true that Christ is *there* and that we are *in Him*.

Ye *are* (not shall be, but *are*), complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10}.

All that we need for happy and solid enjoyment of these wondrous truths is to credit what God has said. It is a work worthy of God, which He has accomplished for us in Christ Jesus, and by His precious blood; and to Him be all the glory.

This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and *this life is in His Son*. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life (1 John 5:11, 12).

But more than this; we are united to Christ risen and ascended by the Holy Ghost:

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (1 Cor. 12:13).

A few words as to the Christian's hope. We must not confound our hope with the Jewish hope. The Jews are taught to look for the Messiah to come *to the earth* and set up the glories of the kingdom. We look for Christ to come *into the air* and catch us up to meet Him. The Jews wait for the day of the Lord, and their scriptures abound with instruction concerning it. We wait for the

morning-star which comes before the day. The coming of Christ to meet us in the air is not found in the Old Testament Scriptures; but was a revelation made to Paul to communicate to the church, as we find in 1 Thess. 4:15. Israel's glory will be ushered in with judgment; the Christian's glory will be ushered in with a shout.

What can the Christian hope for but Christ's coming? He does not hope to be a child of God; he is one. He does not hope to be in Christ; he is in Christ. What can his hope be, then, but the coming of the Lord Himself to take him to glory? Surely it is a blessed hope, a comforting hope, and a soul-purifying hope. Well might the Thessalonian believers turn from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven; and well might the apostle Paul say,

Our citizenship is in, heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ {see Phil. 3:20}.

Assurance

“And he said, Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?” (Gen. 15:8).

We read in the Gospel by John that

the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ {John 1:17};

and while it is blessed to contemplate the glorious testimony of divine grace coming in, after man had proved himself so helpless and guilty under the law, yet we must not suppose that the gospel was not preached before Christ came. It was preached to Adam, after he had fallen beneath the power of sin and Satan, in the promise that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. It was also preached to Abraham four hundred years before the law was given, when God said,

In thee shall all nations be blessed (Gal. 3:8).

It is important to see this, and to consider how God's grace abounded to man, as a sinner, long before the law came. In fact, the Scriptures everywhere teach, that it has only been in the way of grace that God has ever established man in blessing since the fall. When, therefore, the apostle Paul, in the New Testament, treats of the subject of justification, he usually takes us back to Abraham, as having lived long before the law was given, to show that a sinner is reckoned *righteous* before God only in the way of *faith*. This is very important, as it clears from the mind all questions of law-fulfilling as a ground of justification, it leads the soul away from the common thought of creature-fitness to come *up* to God's standard, and prepares the anxious enquirer to receive the peace-speaking fact, that God has come *down* to man while a sinner, with present forgiveness and eternal redemption, in the death of His beloved Son.

God's verdict long ago went forth, that

by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight {Rom. 3:20}.

The law made demands on fallen, sinful man, such as he was unable to fulfil -- it demanded *righteousness* from man to God in the way of *works*; it therefore proved all to be guilty, and under condemnation. The question, then, with a soul truly sensible of his guilt is, Can man be accounted *righteous* by God in any other way? Can a sinner have any ground of *assurance* in any other way? The answer is, Yes; God has come down to man, when a ruined, helpless sinner, in Christ, and brought a perfect and everlasting *righteousness* to him in the way of *faith*. This, as I have said, has been always God's way. He *made* coats of skins, and *clothed* Adam and his wife. Abel obtained witness that he was *righteous* by faith. Noah became heir of the *righteousness* which is by faith: God said to him,

Thee have I seen *righteous* before me {Gen. 7:1}.

Abraham *believed* God, and it was counted to him for *righteousness* {Gal. 3:6}.

All these are examples of *righteousness* in the way of *faith* before the law was given. But did the law alter this ground of *assurance*

and confidence in God? No; for David, who lived under the law; describes the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth *righteousness without works*, saying,

Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin {Rom. 4:7, 8}.

And Paul's fervent language, when coming to the close of an unparalleled life of devotedness to his Master, was, that I may be

found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the *righteousness which is of God by faith* {Phil. 3:9}.

But some may ask, Why *by faith*? Is not *faith* an act of creature-merit? We reply, No; faith is not a work of the flesh, but a fruit of the Spirit. Faith is the gift of God. Faith is always self-renouncing; it brings a broken, empty heart to receive and welcome God's gracious gifts. Faith, therefore, gives *all* the glory to God. As another has said, “Believing in Christ, we come to Him for all, employ Him in all, trust Him through all, look to Him under all, hope in Him to do all, and to Him ascribe the glory of all.”

To return to the chapter before us, we find that Abram

believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for *righteousness* {Gen. 15:6}.

And so now every broken-hearted sinner that believes in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation is *justified* before God. He may have seasons of conflict and temptation, yet he is *justified*.

By Him all that *believe* are *justified from all things*, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses {see Acts 13:39}.

They are justified by the blood of Christ. By His death Christ put away their sins, that they might be made the *righteousness of God in Him*. Hence we are further told, that

Christ is the end of the law for *righteousness* to every one that *believeth* {Rom. 10:4}.

This is blessed. This is the true *grace* of God wherein we stand, and the reception of this glorious truth into the heart gives *assurance*. Here is ground for unwavering, unceasing assurance; for it springs from God's sovereign grace; it is manifested in Christ's perfect work, and based not upon our frames, feelings, or even our measure of apprehension of it, but on the perfect righteousness, unchangeable love, and never-failing faithfulness of God.

The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever {Isa. 32:17}.

“Unchangeable His will,
Whatever be my frame,
His loving heart is still
Eternally the same;

Our souls through many changes go,
His love no change can ever know."

But all believers have not this happy assurance. Some, because they do not know the blessed truth, that the *righteousness of God* is unto all and upon all them that *believe*. Others, because carelessness of walk grieves the Spirit, and dims the eyes of their understanding and faith. Moreover there are various characters of faith. We read of

little faith {Matt. 14:31},

great faith {Matt. 8:10},

and the

full assurance of faith {Heb. 10:22};

but the weakest in the faith is not less justified, not less accounted righteous, than the strongest in the faith. We do not get pardoned at one time, justified at another, sanctified at another. No; receiving Christ crucified, risen and glorified, for salvation, we have all at once. We are washed in His blood, justified by His blood, sanctified by His blood.

All things *are* yours {1 Cor. 3:21},

said the apostle;

and ye are Christ's {1 Cor. 3:23}.

The Father

hath blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ {Eph. 1:3}.

This, I say, is the present portion of the most feeble-minded believer in Christ; but the personal enjoyment of this wondrous grace will be just as we, by faith, abide in the Lord Jesus.

There are some believers who are so weak in faith, and so uninstructed in divine things (perhaps because they do not daily read and prayerfully meditate on the Scriptures), that they stagger at being told that they have life and righteousness *in Christ*; while they believe in Christ for the forgiveness of sins, they shrink from crediting the glorious reality that God has made Christ to be unto them

wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption {1 Cor. 1:30}.

Such, however, lose much joy, as well as strength for service and conflict, and are often filled with gloomy and distressing thoughts; they doubt, and fear, and brood over self and circumstances, because they do not look away from every other object straight to Christ at God's right hand, and believe God's infallible word, which *assures them* of their completeness and security in the glorified Savior of sinners. In some respects they are like Abram was in the Scripture before us; for although God had told him that He had brought him out of Ur of the Chaldees, to *give him* the land to inherit it, he seemed to doubt whether God really meant what He said -- whether He would keep His word and fulfil His promise. Abram was righteous by faith, yet he had doubt and mistrust, like many in the present day. God told him that He brought him from Ur to *give him* the land. This should have been enough to have warranted *assurance* and *confidence*; but it was not. He therefore said,

Lord God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?
{Gen. 15:8}.

This leads us more particularly to the subject of *assurance*. What is it? Is it spiritual attainment? or is it equally the portion of the babe in Christ, who simply takes God at His word? We reply, It is resting, as a sinner, on God's promise in Christ. This many babes in Christ enjoy. God has given His word of truth, shown us His work in Christ, and revealed Himself as the faithful and unchangeable God. He tells us that He

so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life {John 3:16}.

This should be enough; but, alas! it often is not. It is an awful thing to doubt God's word; and yet this is the chief reason why many believers have not the full assurance of faith. Abram was mistrusting God about the land when he said,

Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? {Gen. 15:8}.

What was God's reply? Did He tell Abram that it depended upon his experience, or duties, or feelings? No; He taught Abram that blessing comes to fallen man only through sacrifice, that God's eternal blessings are made sure to us by sacrifice; therefore God sent him to the sacrifice to realize assurance. God's reply was,

Take *me* an heifer of three years old, and a she-goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtle dove, and a young pigeon {Gen. 15:9}.

There, at the sacrifice, Abram was to learn God's character and mind, whereby he might have the *assurance* that he would inherit the land.

It seems to me that we learn from the case before us that there are two things needful for any one to enjoy assurance: --

1. Self-renunciation;
2. The apprehension of God's thoughts of Christ. Let us consider them a little.

1. SELF-RENUNCIATION. It is wonderful how thoughts of creature-righteousness cleave to us. It is hard indeed habitually to take the place of

no confidence in the flesh {Phil. 3:3};

that

all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags {Isa. 64:6};

that in our flesh dwells

no good thing {Rom. 7:18};

and that no measure of devotedness can make the promise of God in Christ more secure. But these things the Spirit of God teaches. He convinces of sin, and testifies of Christ; and God's declaration must be carried out, that

no flesh should glory in His presence {1 Cor. 1:29}.

It is often a very humbling process to learn by the Spirit's teaching, that being born anew does not improve the flesh; that the believer has two natures; that there is no similarity in "the flesh" and "the Spirit"; that "the flesh" always remains the same, only that it is kept under by "the Spirit."

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit {John 3:6}.

Do we not gather from the fact, that while Abram was before the sacrifice, and

an horror of great darkness fell upon him {Gen. 15:12},

he was taught by God Himself the humbling lessons of self-loathing and unworthiness, that he might be the more thoroughly convinced that he could inherit the land only on the ground of God's free grace. And when the Holy Spirit opens up to us our history before God, and discloses to us the real character of the thoughts and intents of our hearts, the iniquity of our most holy things, the pride of our humblest doings, the self-love and unbelief that are associated with our most devoted hours, do we not know something too of a horror of darkness? We often need, as well as Abram, humbling exercises, that we may lean wholly upon God, and know how to ground all our expectations of good on a source entirely outside ourselves. And where shall we learn these lessons so effectually as in the presence of God, in the contemplation of what He has done for us, and has made us in Christ? So long as thoughts of creature-merit or sufficiency are allowed by us, doubts and fears will distress the soul, because the eye will look within, instead of wholly to God in Christ. Or, if thoughts of our own doing be mixed up with our standing before God, we shall slide away from grace, get under law, and lack assurance; or if we set up some standard of experience and walk, as evidences, so long as we come up to our imagined measure, will there be quiet self-complacency; but when we come short, our fancied evidences will be gone, and gloom, and fear, and perhaps despair, will follow. There must be the sense of our total ruin and vileness in the flesh, to look wholly to God, through Christ, with quietness and *assurance*. I will refer to an anecdote which remarkably illustrates this point. "An Indian and a white man were both brought under conviction by the same sermon. The Indian was soon brought to rejoice in pardoning mercy; the white man was a long time under distress of mind, and at times was almost ready to despair; but at length he was also brought to experience forgiving love. Some time after, meeting his red brother, he thus addressed him: 'How is it that I should be so long under conviction, when you found comfort so soon?' 'Oh, brother!' replied the Indian, 'me tell you. There come along a rich prince; he purpose to give you a new coat; you look at your coat and say, I don't know, my coat pretty good; I believe it do a little longer. He then offer me a new coat; I look on my old blanket; I say, *this good for nothing* -- I say, this good for nothing; I fling it right away, and accept the new coat. Just so, brother, you keep your righteousness for some time, you loath to give it up; but I, poor Indian, had none, therefore I glad at once to receive righteousness, the Lord Jesus Christ.'"

2. THE APPREHENSION OF GOD'S THOUGHTS OF CHRIST AND HIS WORK. Let none suppose that they will have full assurance of faith, if the contemplation of Christ and His cross be neglected. The Scriptures testify of Him. The Holy Spirit testifies of Him. We know we have the earnest of the Spirit, because we look wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ for acceptance with God; and it is to the person and work of Christ that the Spirit continually leads us. The victims Abram was commanded to take for God were in their prime, to represent the perfection of the

Lamb without spot {see Heb. 9:14}.

The fowls came down on the carcasses; but he drove them away, because it was God's sacrifice, and should be honored. He divided some into pieces, and laid each piece one against another. Here he remained, *before the sacrifice*, under divine instruction; and when all around was dark, and a horror of great darkness was within, when every earthly hope and confidence were gone, then a burning furnace and a smoking lamp passed between the pieces -- the former, to teach that divine wrath could be expended on the victim, and all the rivers of eternal love flow without obstruction to the sinner that believes; and the latter, to show that divine light had searched the sacrifice, and rightly estimated its value. We are then told that

the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I *given* this *land* {Gen. 15:18};

and we do not read that the patriarch had another question on the subject. The threefold cord of his assurance and confidence was the promise of God, the redemption-work of God, and the faithfulness of God. And surely this is the secret of assurance with us. It is not based on what we are, but on what God is; and we know our personal interest in His eternal blessings, by being led by His Spirit to renounce ourselves, and look to the one only sacrifice for sin, the alone ground of acceptance with God.

"Without one thought that's good to plead,
Oh, what could shield me from despair,
But this -- though I am vile indeed,
The Lord my righteousness is there?"

Let us now seek to apply these truths. Whenever, dear Christian reader, your soul is assailed with doubts and fears, look at once straight to Jesus -- the Lamb as it had been slain, now in the midst of the throne. Beware of looking within for righteousness; for

Christ in the glory is your righteousness (see Rom. 10:4).

Beware of looking at the Spirit's work in you as a ground of justification; for we are justified by the blood of Christ. Beware of comparing yourselves with others as a proof of your acceptance; for Christ only is the way to the Father. Beware of looking at your frames or experiences as evidences; for we often change, and our hearts are very deceitful; but the love of Christ changeth not. Oh, like Abram, look at God's sacrifice! Contemplate the perfection, spotlessness, the eternal beauty and worth of Jesus! His fitness, His fulness, His love, His offices! Consider His ways, His sayings, His sufferings, agonies, blood-shedding and death! Behold the Holy One made sin for us, and let the burning lamp, the light of God's truth, shine upon the scene! Harken to God's testimony! Listen to His judgment of the value of the cross! See sin put away, and righteousness brought in! Welcome the testimony of God, that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth *us* (yes, us) from *all* sin; that we are

justified freely by His grace {Rom. 3:24},

and

accepted in the Beloved {Eph. 1:6}!

Oh, behold your iniquities, transgressions, and sins laid upon Him, your old man crucified with Him, the fierce wrath of

Jehovah going over Him, that you might be free. Abiding here, self-loathing will take the place of self-righteousness, self-abasement will displace self-confidence, assurance will banish doubt, and praise and thanksgiving will ascend to the Father of mercies in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Jesus bruised and put to shame,
Tells me all Jehovah’s name;
God is love, I surely know,
By the Savior’s depths of woe.

“In His spotless soul’s distress
I perceive my guiltiness;
Oh, how vile my low estate,
Since my ransom was so great!”

Perhaps my reader is a backslider. You have lost the *assurance* of your interest in Christ. You were once happy in the Lord, and happy with His people. You took sweet counsel together, and found His ways to be ways of pleasantness and peace. But you grew careless; you neglected secret prayer, you discontinued the daily reading of the Scriptures, you little and little gave up the public and private society of God’s children. You became intimate with worldlings, and *walked with them*. You indulged in sin. Your conscience was at first troubled, but by degrees it became hardened; yet you have not been happy. Your assurance and confidence in God are gone.

O wretched man that I am! {Rom. 7:24}

you sometimes exclaim. Be assured, friend, that Jesus loves you still, though your ways have so grieved Him.

“Midst all thy fears, and sin, and woe,
His love will never let thee go.”

Return, then, to Him *at once*; acknowledge your iniquity; confess your sins; tell Him *all* your sad course, and He will restore you; He will pardon, He will heal your backslidings, and love you freely.

If we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness {1 John 1:9}.

But perhaps my reader is not trusting in Christ for salvation. You have heard the gospel, but you believe not. If it be so, you have from the Scripture, not the assurance of salvation, but the assurance of eternal damnation --

He that believeth not shall be damned {Mark 16:16}.

God has declared it shall be, and it must be; for God cannot deny Himself. His word must be fulfilled. You refuse mercy, and must have judgment. You disobey God, and He must punish. You reject His salvation, therefore you must have everlasting destruction. Oh, unhappy man! This world is your heaven, this life is your best, and at the end of your career you will say,

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and *I* am not saved {see Jer. 8:20}!

Not saved! Be astonished, ye angels, that men reject this great salvation!! and be *assured*, my reader, that you are in the broad road to destruction. Every day you draw nearer to the pit of torment, every hour your pleasures of sin become less, every

moment you hasten onward to your eternal doom. Is it not so? Can there be a doubt of it, if you remain Christless? Is not His word most decisive? Has not He said, *Except* ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish! *Except* a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. *Except* ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you!

Jesus in Company With a Religious Man and a Sinner

And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace (Luke 7:36-50).

In this brief narrative, we have recorded the ways of Jesus when in company with a sinner, a religious man (Simon the Pharisee), and others that sat at meat with Him.

The circumstances were very simple. The Pharisee, like religious people in our day, had a certain respect for one who had the reputation of being a prophet, or a teacher sent from God. Jesus was therefore an object of interest to him, though he knew Him not as the Son of God, the Savior of sinners. It is lamentable how many seem to make the Lord, or even the Bible, a matter of *interest*, instead of being a matter of *salvation*. The Pharisee had invited the Lord to eat with him, and as He came, not to judge the world, but to save, He accordingly went. While there, a notoriously wicked woman came into the house, and, among all the guests, her heart singled out the Lord as the one who alone could meet her need; she cast herself down at His feet behind Him, and it was evident that her soul-distress was very considerable. This fact was enough to appeal loudly to the *conscience* of the religious Pharisee. He was surprised at his guest allowing a woman of that character to *touch* Him, so that he really began to suspect whether he had not been estimating Him too highly in thinking Him to be a prophet. This opened the way for the Lord of glory to pour forth, in the presence of them all, the blessed testimony of divine *grace* -- the grace of God which bringeth salvation -- and to manifest the fact that He came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Simon little thought that his guest was the Son of God. Little either did he suspect that his heart and conscience were laid bare to the eyes of Him whom he had desired to eat with him. The Pharisee feared to tell out his thoughts; but

he spake within himself, saying this man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner (Luke 7:39).

Yes, *he spake within himself*; but the Lord searches the heart. He can read the inmost thought. All is naked to His eye; and He declares that *every* imagination of the thoughts of man's *heart* is *only* evil, and that *continually* (Gen. 6:5). Such is man before the eye of God -- only and continually evil. But Simon, like many

others, thought himself righteous, and therefore he despised this sinful woman; he was evidently grieved to see her in his house, and was astonished that his guest should have allowed such a person to *touch* Him. He marvelled how Jesus could welcome such a sinner; and it is a wonder to unbelieving hearts still, because they think that it is religious or good people that Christ embraces; and they do not believe the blessed fact, that Christ died for the ungodly, and that He saves sinners -- guilty, hell-deserving sinners.

How does the Lord meet these unbelieving and self-righteous thoughts of the blind Pharisee? In perfect wisdom, gentleness, and kindness, He says,

Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on {Luke 7:40}.

And then, if I mistake not, He draws a portrait of both the sinner and the Pharisee as an appeal to this self-righteous conscience.

A certain creditor had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both {Luke 7:41, 42}.

As much as to say, Suppose, then, that it be true that this woman is an open transgressor of God's laws, and that her flagrant sins are manifest, so that she is considered ten times as great a violator of right principles as some others, and call her a five hundred pence debtor; and then suppose that little can be said of Simon as to outward misconduct; suppose even that his transgressions against outward morality are few, and seldom repeated, so that he is only a fifty pence debtor; still, the fact is, that whether the debt be little or much, both are so thoroughly bankrupt, as to have nothing whatever to pay their creditor's demand. This is most important; because it is not now a question of a person being a great sinner, or a little sinner; the question is, Are your sins forgiven? How can you meet God on the judgment of your sins? for you are in debt, and cannot pay. The answer is, that God is the God of all grace, and, frankly, unasked, proclaims forgiveness in pity and mercy, because you cannot liquidate any portion of the debt yourself. This is grace -- God in rich mercy forgiving sins,

and justly so too, on the ground of the atoning death of His beloved Son.

Christ died for the ungodly {Rom. 5:6}.

He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God {see 1 Pet. 3:18}.

Then the Lord appeals to Simon as to which would love the forgiving creditor most; for the prostrate woman was lavishing, as it were, her grateful heart over the sacred feet of her newly-found Savior. To this question he answered,

I suppose that he to whom he forgave most {Luke 7:43}.

This is clear enough: hence the Savior said,

Thou hast rightly judged {Luke 7:43}.

The principles of divine grace and truth being thus laid down, the application follows; and the Lord having drawn a portrait, bringing each guilty and undone before God, alike in need, alike dependent on the free mercy of God, now shows the difference between a soul that apprehends Him as the Savior of sinners, and one, however religious, who knows Him not. How wonderfully skilful was this perfect Preacher in using the truth; for Simon needed to be awakened to a sense of his guilt, and the hollowness of his religious pretensions; the woman needed to be comforted, and filled with that joy and peace which the Savior brought for broken-hearted, sin-convicted people.

He turns then to the woman, but still addresses the Pharisee. Directing Simon's attention to the woman, He says,

I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet {Luke 7:44}:

that is, you have not even shown me a common mark of respect and attention:

but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss

-- did not salute me with an ordinary mark of affection:

but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My *head* with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my *feet* with ointment {Luke 7:44, 46}.

Thus the blessed Lord shows Simon how much there was in the ways of this despised, sinful woman superior to himself, and, as He afterwards teaches, the spring of all is love -- the fruit of a heart moved with gratitude to the Lord. Because of deep-felt need, she clung to Him as the alone Savior, and knew that He only could make her crimson sins white as wool. She had found Him. Her soul had been longing after personal dealing with this Friend of sinners, and now she had found Him, she counted Him worthy of the costliest service. The alabaster box was broken, His feet anointed, after being bathed with tears of grateful love, and wiped with the hairs of her head. Her love was the fruit of forgiveness of her *many* sins. She therefore loved much. Hence Jesus added,

Wherefore I say unto *thee*, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for *she loved much*: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little (Luke 7:47).

But further. The Lord thus far has only addressed Himself to Simon. The woman seems to be all this time lying at His feet. She must be comforted, and learn from the Lord Himself that her filthiness is cleansed, her iniquity pardoned. Therefore Jesus said unto her,

Thy sins *are* forgiven {Luke 7:48}.

Nor is this all; He again addresses Himself to her --

Thy faith hath *saved* thee; go in *peace* {Luke 7:50}.

We have here three present blessings of eternal importance. Present forgiveness of sins, present salvation, present peace. If we had met this woman the next day, and said to her, "Are your sins forgiven? are you saved?" what would have been her reply? "Yes, I have forgiveness; I am saved." And then, if asked, "Are you quite sure that your sins are forgiven?" would she not have said, "Yes, quite sure, because the Savior told me so; and *His word* can never fail!"

It is present peace, present forgiveness, present salvation, that so many are denying in our day. They say that we cannot know these things till we come to die. But we have seen what the Lord taught; and there are many more Scripture testimonies to the same effect; and the Scripture cannot be broken. The Lord certainly gave this woman the fullest warrant for taking her stand as a *saved* person, and that, too, in the way of *faith*.

Thy *faith* hath *saved* thee {Luke 7:50}.

It was not her tears, the ointment, or anything else that saved, blessed fruits as they were; but Jesus alone is the Savior, and those who accept Him are perfectly secure. It was not doctrines about Christ, or religious duties, or prayers, or anything else, but Christ Himself to whom she had clung, and known as her very own Savior. It was Himself, the Son which came forth from the Father, whom she had made her refuge, and in whom alone her confidence rested. Blessed sample of simple faith! Blessed testimony, too, of the reality of present forgiveness of sins, present salvation, and present peace, leaving no room for fear or doubt, or a moment's misgiving, as to the security of that soul whose simple trust is in the Lord Jesus, the Savior of lost, guilty sinners.

But those who sat at meat could no longer be silent. Man hates grace. He cannot bear the free, unmerited love of God.

Who is this,
they said,
that forgiveth sins also? {Luke 7:49}.

Yes, who is this? That has always been the question, and so it is still.

Who is this?

He was in the world, the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.

The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth {John 1:14}.

He said,

I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father {John 16:28}.

He died upon the cross to save sinners, and having finished the work, God raised Him from the dead, and exalted Him to His own right hand in heaven.

After He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God: from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool {Heb. 10:12, 13}.

Free Grace; Or, Living Water

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. 22:1).

There is peculiar solemnity in the closing chapters of the Revelation. Salvation and damnation, life and death, grace and judgment, glory and eternal torment, are the subjects of it; and whether the scene is heavenly glory, or the throne of eternal judgment, the LAMB stands most conspicuous and exalted.

Few people read the Revelation. The excuse of many is that it is so difficult to understand; whereas its title expresses its simplicity. Revelation does not mean that which is difficult, but something *revealed*, or made plain; but the truth is, that however simple God's word is,

the natural man *receiveth not* the things of the Spirit of God {1 Cor. 2:14}.

The neglect of this book, even by professing Christians, is very sad, notwithstanding it is our Lord's last letter to His beloved servants -- God's last written communication to man -- and that it is prefaced with,

Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand {Rev. 1:3}.

Dear friends, how is it that we so neglect the Revelation of Jesus Christ?

It is wonderful how God blesses the reading of this book. Many a soul has been awakened through reading or hearing the things that are therein written; many a troubled conscience has been quieted and comforted by seeing, in the visions of glory there presented to us, that redeemed sinners are around the throne of God solely on the ground of the blood of the Lamb; while others have been preserved from ten thousand snares of the devil, by keeping the things that are written therein. Nothing shows more plainly the real importance of this book than the command in the last chapter,

Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand {Rev. 22:10};

and also,

Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that *keepeth the sayings* of the prophecy of this book {Rev. 22:7}.

What are we to understand by keeping the sayings of the prophecy of this book? Surely this book does not present to us a list of absolute commands to be obeyed, like the law of Moses did. No. It does, however, present to us the working out in result of the great principles seen around us, and so shows us the difference between truth and error, the bride and the harlot, Christ and Satan, in such astonishing ways, that it greatly helps and guides us in our heavenward journey, when we *keep* those sayings in our minds, before our eyes, and in our hearts.

The Revelation of Jesus Christ is divided into three parts.

1. The things which John saw.
2. The things which are.
3. The things which shall be after these.

The verse before us is among the things which are yet future. The apostle had been carried away into a great and exceeding high mountain, to behold the Bride, the Lamb's wife, and he saw her

descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God {Rev. 21:10, 11}.

We know, from other Scriptures, that prior to this she will be caught up . . . to meet the Lord in the air {1 Thess. 4:17}.

Now John saw her coming forth in heavenly glory, manifested to the earthly nations; having been made partaker of the grace of God, she now shares with Christ the glory of God. She is presented to us under the symbol of a city. But I do not now propose to enter into that, but immediately proceed to our verse:

And He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb {Rev. 22:1}.

This is still a part of the description of the heavenly Jerusalem; for the next verse speaks of

the street of it {Rev. 22:2},

evidently identifying it with what had gone before in the previous chapter.

But what, I ask, does the water of life represent? Have we any Scripture proof as to what the water of life means? Let us see, and may the Lord graciously help us.

In turning to the gospel by John, it is said of Christ, in the first chapter,

In Him was *life* {John 1:4},

and that He was

full of grace and truth; {John 1:14}

and in various other Scriptures, *life* and *grace* are found together. For instance, in Rom. 5 we read, that

grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal *life*, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

In 1 Pet. 3:7, we read of

the *grace of life*.

In Rom. 8:2, of the

Spirit of *life* in Christ Jesus.

My reader will remember how the Lord Himself spoke to the sinful Samaritan woman about the necessity of drinking living water, in order to find peace and joy.

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee *living water* {John 4:10}.

Here we see Him who was the life, the dispenser of living water to a sinner dead in trespasses and sins; and He also speaks of the effects of this *living water* in the soul. Speaking of the water of Jacob's well, He saith,

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into *everlasting life* {John 4:10}.

In the previous chapter our Lord had told Nicodemus the Pharisee, not only of the eternal importance of the new birth, but that it consisted of being born of *water* and of the Spirit, which was known only to those who believed in the Son of man lifted up; and the chapter concludes with the most positive declaration, that to be without Christ is to be without *life*. In the fifth of John we have Christ presented to us as the quickener of whom He will, and He declares that he that heareth His word, and believes on Him that sent Him, *hath everlasting life*, and is passed from death unto *life*. The resurrection of believers is there called

the resurrection of *life* {John 5:29};

and the reproof of Christ is, that persons would not come unto Him, that they might have *life*. In the next chapter we again see Christ as the dispenser of living water -- eternal life -- promising life for evermore to every one that comes to Him, and saying,

The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are *life* {John 6:63};

and when Peter was asked if he would go away, he exclaimed,

Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of *eternal life* {John 6:68}.

The seventh chapter shows us that Christ is the fountain to satisfy the thirsty soul, and also that living water, taken in by faith, sinks deep into the feelings and affections, and is felt to be so precious and abundant, as to flow out copiously to those around.

If any man thirst,

said Jesus,

let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water {John 7:37, 38}.

Would that we knew more of this in our day, beloved! Why is it that there is not more testimony to Christ? but because we so little go unto Him and drink. The tenth chapter of John shows us that the sheep have *life* only through the death of the Good Shepherd, teaching us that Jesus crucified is the only fountain of living water. In the next chapter we see Jesus the life-giver, and raiser of the dead, eminently set forth; while the 12th chapter still more plainly shows us that *life* and union with Christ could only have come to us through His death.

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit {John 12:24}.

In the 14th chapter Christ is emphatically called

the Life {John 14:6};

and the next chapter shows us that fruit-bearing to the glory of the Father is only by living union with Christ *the Life*; and to pass on to the 20th chapter, after the person, death, and resurrection of Christ have been set before us, the Holy Ghost, by John, says,

These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that *believing* ye might have *life* through His name {John 20:31}.

The water of life, then, is God's blessed grace unto life eternal, flowing out to man as a sinner through Christ, whether a profligate

Samaritan, or an outwardly decent Pharisee. Like the river in Eden was to water the ground, so living water is blessing, eternal blessing, to the poor and needy. This seems to me proved from the many Scriptures already quoted; and perhaps the endless occupation and joy of the Church of God will be perpetually drinking this living water; ever having unfolded to us more and more of the love of God, and our souls ever rejoicing before Him with fulness of joy, when we shall sing --

“For ever of His grace,
For ever of His love”;

being abundantly satisfied with the fatness of His house, and made to drink of the river of His pleasure: for the Lamb Himself will be to us a fountain of living water.

But let us look a little more carefully at our verse, and notice first the ORIGIN of this living water --

proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb
{Rev. 22:1}.

God is the God of grace, and Jesus Christ is full of grace. Grace, like every other good gift, is from above, and it flows to us through Jesus crucified, risen, and ascended; as we sometimes sing --

“To Jesus we our praises bring,
For *grace* proceeds *from* Him.”

Many confound grace *in* them with the grace brought *to* them, and they have not peace. They must look clean out of themselves, and receive righteousness and peace from God through the Lord Jesus Christ. They will find their conscience purged only by His blood. We must first drink living water, before it can spring up *in* us, or flow out *from* us. We must receive *grace for* us to have *peace in* us.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation {Titus 2:11};

and when the apostles wrote to their fellow-Christians, they usually commenced with

Grace unto you, and peace, *from* God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ.

Yes, grace proceedeth

out of the throne of God and of the Lamb {Rev.22:1}.

It is eternal in its source, and carries our thoughts back to God's purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began {2 Tim. 1:9};

and being eternal in its source, it is abundant, unchanging, and everlasting, in its operations; hence we read,

By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14).

Yea, God Himself is

the God of all grace {1 Pet. 5:10};

and this is the glory of the gospel; it is called

the glorious gospel (or the gospel of the glory), of the blessed God {1 Tim. 1:11}.

Could we but look into the heart of the invisible God, we should see thoughts of grace and peace to men as sinners, counsels of eternal redemption between the persons of the Godhead, pardon for

the guilty, salvation for the lost. Jesus came to manifest this, and His death upon the cross was the outflowing of divine grace; a

pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb {Rev. 22:1}.

Happy those who drink freely!

2. Observe that the water is living; it is called
water of life.

Ah, dear reader, nothing less than life, life eternal, could meet the need of those who were dead in trespasses and sins. The law could not make us righteous, or give us life; it only made manifest our sin. But Jesus came to give *life*. He was the overflowing fountain of living water, and whosoever drank

passed from death unto life {John 5:24}.

It is not life for a day or two, like the manna was to the hungry Israelites; no! it is everlasting life that Christ dispenses. He could say,

He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever {John 6:58},
never see death {John 8:51},
never perish {John 10:28},
not come into condemnation, &c. {John 5:24}.

In Ezek. 47, where we find a counterpart of the heavenly Jerusalem, in the prophetic testimony concerning the earthly Jerusalem, we read that

every thing shall *live* whithersoever the river cometh {see Ezek. 47:9};

and so is the Lord Jesus who was crucified. You cannot come to Him, dear reader, for salvation without living for ever.

He that cometh to me,
saith Jesus,

shall *never* hunger; and He that believeth in me shall *never* thirst {John 6:35}.

Oh, beloved friends, this is a deep reality! Receiving Christ into the heart as a Savior is always connected with present comfort, and eternal blessing. A sense of peace, the new birth, present possession of life eternal, are connected with drinking living water --

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature {it is new creation, 2 Cor. 5:17}.

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren {1 John 3:14}.

Oh, ye feeble-minded, halting, fainting, doubting, fearing children of God! be comforted, be happy, be assured *by the word of the living God*, that you live for ever, because you believe on the Lord Jesus; you have tasted the grace of God in Christ, you have drank the living water, and your heart goes *upward* to the blood-stained mercy-seat, *outward* in love to God's people, and *onward* to the coming glory waiting for God's Son from heaven. Fear not; Jesus now intercedes for you in heaven.

3. This water is also *abundant*; not a pool, but a "river," as Ezekiel's river,

a river to swim in, a river that cannot be passed over {see Ezek. 47:5}.

Oh, the depths of the riches of the grace of God! There is not only mercy with God, but with Him is

plenteous redemption {Psa. 130:7}.

The figure of a river is very beautiful. Its origin is hidden, but the further you trace it from its source, the wider and deeper it becomes. So is the grace of God in Christ; yea, Jesus is full of grace. We none of us know much of its depth, and height, and length, and breadth; but this we know, that the longer we live, the more we feel that we need the glorious truths of the sovereign and unchanging grace of God to sustain us, and the more we enter into its vastness. And so we believe it will be; for yesterday the Holy Spirit said,

He giveth *more* grace {James 4:6};

to-day He says,

He giveth *more* grace;

to-morrow it will be,

He giveth *more* grace;

and the next day still it will be,

He giveth *more* grace;

and so on, until we see Jesus face to face, and find ourselves eternally happy in the bosom of His matchless grace.

4. But notice further, that this water is also *pure*. There is sometimes mercy among men when guilt is proved, and the stain not cleansed. A prisoner is proved guilty of a capital offence and condemned to die; but just before the expected execution a reprieve is sent, and though the prisoner's life is spared, the stain of guilt remains -- there is pardon, but not purity. But the grace of God is pure; it is clean, and makes clean. Grace reigns through righteousness. God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth. God is pure, Christ is pure, the believer is pure -- his heart is purified by faith; he is cleansed from all sin, justified from all things.

Again, God's grace is *pure*, because of its perfection. It is not a mixture of man's doings and God's work, not a compound of law and grace, but *pure* grace, the simple outflowing of the heart of the pure and holy God, freely giving remission of sins to every one that believeth, because Christ has died upon the cross under the judgment of our sins. Oh, dear children of God, do not try to join together *law* and *gospel*! There is an amazing distinction between them. No two things can more differ.

The *law* was given by Moses, but *grace and truth* came by Jesus Christ {John 1:17}.

The deadliest cup of poison that Satan can present to a sinner is a mixture of law and gospel. The mixture sets aside both law and gospel. Blessed be God, the water of life is pure; let us beware of any corruption of the pure doctrine of the unmerited love of God.

5. Lastly, the water of life is presented to us as
clear as crystal {Rev. 22:1};

which, I apprehend, teaches us not only that it is pure and transparent, but also that it is glorious. When John saw the holy city, it was

like unto a stone most precious -- even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal {Rev. 21:11}.

Ah, dear reader, the grace of God is truly glorious; hence we read of the

glory of His grace {Eph. 1:6}.

The Lord will give grace and glory {Psa. 84:11}.

There is majesty in grace; for heaven's throne is called

the throne of grace {Heb. 4:16}.

Yes, it flows from the eternal counsels of God, and redounds to His eternal glory; and in ages yet to come He will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. The Lamb will be ever loving and ever refreshing His people.

“There we shall see His face,
And never, never sin;
There, from the rivers of His grace,
Drink endless pleasures in.”

And now, dear Christians, let us remind each other that salvation is by grace alone, from first to last.

By *grace* are ye *saved* through faith {Eph. 2:8}.

Here let us abide. Our eternal occupation will be drinking more deeply these streams of living water; then let us now, under the Spirit's teaching, seek to learn more and more of the love of our God to us. This alone will cheer us when sad, and lift us up when faint, keep us humble before God, make us sympathising and tender toward others, and strong for the service of God and conflict with Satan. Grace alone enables us to bring forth fruit unto God.

The grace of God that bringeth salvation . . . teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, &c. {Titus 2:11-14}.

Oh, beloved! this pure river is ever flowing, and when we feel barren and dark, it is not because God hath forgotten to be gracious, but because we have forgotten His grace. Oh, think often of the riches of grace! Surely it is a river to swim in, a river that cannot be passed over. There is no sinking here; for

He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might
He increaseth strength {Isa. 40:29}.

Oh to be

strong in the *grace* that is in Christ Jesus {2 Tim. 2:1}!

for --

“Though all things change, He changeth not,
He ne'er forgets, though oft forgot;
His love's unchangeably the same,
And as enduring as His name.”

Now let me address myself to the unconverted. You have heard of the Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified for sinners, as the Giver of living water, and be assured that there is salvation in no other. Like the rock that was smitten in the wilderness, to give water to the thirsty people to save them from death, so Christ who was crucified is a river of life, and every needy soul that comes to Him finds it to be so of a truth. Are *you*, my reader, thirsting for forgiveness of sins, and peace with God? Are *you* not saying, Oh

that I could find rest for my troubled conscience? If so, come just as you are to the Lord Jesus Christ, and *receive* those eternal blessings that God so freely *gives* to sinners. Like the prophet to Israel, we are ready to cry,

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price {Isa. 55:1}.

But I fear you are a careless sinner; you hear as if you heard not. You do not care to come to Christ that you might have life. Oh, you little think that Jesus said,

He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but *the wrath of God abideth on him* {John 3:36}.

Oh, Christless soul! remember that

the wrath of God abideth on you {see John 3:36}.

You may lie down on your bed this night and sleep, but, alas! *the wrath of God abideth on you*. You may go to your business or pleasure on the morrow with a smiling countenance, but *the wrath of God abideth on you*. Time may roll over you, and you may find yourself on a sick bed; kind friends wait upon you, and smooth your dying pillow; but you have no consolation -- *the wrath of God abideth on you*. Your weakness increases, your limbs rapidly emaciate, your strength declines quickly, your flesh quivers, the joints of your back are loosed, your breathing becomes more and more difficult, and, solemn to relate, when the vital chord is snapped by the chilly hand of death, then you will awfully and eternally prove that *the wrath of God abideth on you*. Oh that you may *now* take warning, and flee from the wrath to come! Do you not know that almost the last words in the Bible are,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely
{Rev. 22:17}?

If, when thirsty, you passed near some sparkling, crystal-like fountain of water, and saw it labelled, “Drink freely,” would you not taste the pure, clear stream? Then why will you any longer reject the water of life? why will you be deaf to that loving voice which says,

I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely {Rev. 21:6}?

“This fountain, though rich, from charge is quite free,
The poorer the wretch, the welcomer he;
Here's strength for the weakly that hither are led,
Here's health for the sickly, here's life for the dead.

“This fountain in vain has never been tried;
It takes out all stains wherever applied;
The water flows sweetly with virtue divine,
To cleanse souls completely, though leprous as mine.”

Oh, my reader, Jesus is quickly coming! If you do not turn to Him *now*, He will, He must, come upon you with fiery wrath; for He will soon

be revealed . . . from heaven in flaming fire
{2 Thess. 1:7, 8}.

Death And Judgment Past for the Believer

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation (Heb. 9:27, 28).

There are three different appearances of the Lord spoken of at the end of this chapter. We read of Christ having appeared at the end of the world -- the end of the ages -- to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. 9:26). You see it was not simply to make a way for the sinner that Christ died, but to do what nothing else ever did or could do -- to put away sin; and so completely has this been done, that we read elsewhere of sins being purged, blotted out, cast into the depths of the sea, cast behind God's back, never more to be remembered, and the like, to show us God's estimate of the value of Christ's work. Some say that they must every now and then look at their sins; but how much better is it to look to Jesus, and see how completely they have been

put away!

Observe, the Scripture says,

PUT AWAY!

Then you find Christ spoken of as appearing somewhere *now*. Where is it? In heaven. He is gone back again to the Father, gone into heaven with that which has accomplished our eternal redemption. He entered into heaven itself by His own blood. He is there as a great High Priest for all believers. He is only a High Priest for such: the unbeliever is far from God. Jesus, then, is now appearing in the presence of God for us. He is our righteousness, life, redemption, so that we appear before God as He is; we are perfect in Christ Jesus.

Then we have another appearing mentioned in the closing words of the chapter, which is yet future, though we know not how very near it may be; but I shall hope to refer to that soon. Meanwhile, I would call attention to the very solemn truth recorded in Heb. 9:27, 28:

As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.

The *as* and *so* here are very emphatic.

Death and judgment are God's appointments for men, because they are sinners. The divine verdict is not only that

all have sinned {Rom. 3:23; 5:12},

but that all are

under sin {Rom. 7:14} --

servants of sin {Rom. 6:17; 20};

so that sin to the natural man is something agreeable to his nature; hence we read of the

pleasures of sin {Heb. 11:25}.

Death is the result of sin, and so is judgment; and what can God's condemnation of sin be but eternal? Hence we read of the

second death {Rev. 21:8},

the lake of fire. Death, then, is God's just sentence on men because of sin --

the wages of sin is death {Rom. 6:23}.

There was one Man here on whom death had no claim, because in Him was no sin; sin having been laid upon Him, sin in the flesh was condemned in Himself, and He died; but He saw no corruption.

It was not possible that He should be holden of death {see Acts 2:24}.

This was the spotless, holy Jesus, the Savior of sinners.

Men know they must die, and therefore try to make it, by comfortable circumstances, as agreeable as they can; but they cannot bear to think of "judgment." Nevertheless, it is God's appointment, and cannot be altered. *Men* are exposed to *death* and *judgment*; for they are under the dominion of sin as well as the guilt of sin; they are, therefore,

servants of sin {Rom. 6:17; 20},

and

the wages of sin is death.

This is very plain. It is not simply the death of the body; but if a man die in his sins, he will be raised again, and judged for those sins before the great white throne, and then cast into the lake of fire, the second death of everlasting darkness and misery. Those of you, therefore, who are still in your sins are going on to death and judgment -- God's appointments. How can you bear the thought of being judged by the light of God's infinite holiness and unchanging hatred to sin?

We have here, as it were, two parallel columns. The one headed "men," and having written under it "death" and "judgment"; the other headed,

them that look for Him {Heb. 9:28}

-- "believers," and under that is written, "Christ put away their sins, and consequently delivered them from death and judgment." How wide the contrast! The one clouded with darkness and misery, the other bright with light and glory. Observe the *as* and *so*. *As* death and judgment were the doom of *men* because of sin, *so* Christ bore the sins, and death and judgment. He bore

the sins of many {Heb. 9:28}.

How blessed is the portion of those who have Christ for their Savior!

I would now, my friends, ask if *you* have received Jesus the Son of God as *your* Savior? I do not ask if you have good intentions; for I believe multitudes *intend* to go to heaven who are still treading the broad road to destruction; neither do I ask if you have some knowledge of the doctrines of Christ; but I do ask if you have received Him? You may say, I pray more, give more, deny myself more, and the like; but that is not the question. To know Christ, and take Him as your very own Savior, because there is no other, knowing you must perish in eternal misery without Him because of your sins, this is the vital question. For it is not knowing doctrines, or giving alms, or saying prayers, that can deliver you from death and judgment, but Jesus the Son of God, and Jesus only.

As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God {John 1:12}.

Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish {see John 3:15}.

Or, as the blessed Lord said in another place,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation (or judgment) (John 5:24).

Blessed deliverance! Happy indeed are those who, having simply received Christ as their Savior, can rest their heads on their pillows in sweetest confidence and peace, knowing that their sins were purged by the sacrifice of Christ, and that they will not come into judgment. Such are already on the other side of death.

They have passed from death unto life {see John 5:24; 1 John 3:14}.

The believer, then, is delivered from what every unbeliever is exposed to -- death and judgment. How is it that he is delivered from death? for do not we see that saints die just the same as sinners? They may appear to as to their bodies; but the wages of sin is not simply the separation of soul and body, but there is a "sting" and "terror" connected with death that knows no rest or solace. The believer is so completely delivered from these things that he can say,

O death, where is thy sting? {1 Cor. 15:55}

for the sting of death being

sin {1 Cor. 15:56},

it is removed by the precious blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin. The "terror," too, is gone, because he knows that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. The believer's death, therefore, is not called death in the New Testament, but falling asleep in Jesus. Hence, too, the blessed Lord said,

If a man keep my saying, he shall never *see* death {John 8:51} --

he shall never *taste* of death {John 8:52}.

Blessed, glorious fact, that the soul that has accepted Christ for its Savior is so completely delivered from death, that, when Jesus comes, those who are alive will at once, in a moment, be changed, and caught up into the air to meet Him!

As to "judgment," nothing can be more contrary to the teaching of Scripture than to suppose that saints are going to be judged as to whether they shall have eternal life or not. I refer to the wrong use made of our Lord's teaching on the sheep and the goats. On referring to it (Matt. 25:31-46), you will see that there is no idea of resurrection there, not one dead person raised; but, instead of that, it is the King coming here, and judging the nations as to how they dealt with His brethren, a remnant of Jews who will go forth with the gospel of the kingdom after we have been caught up at the Lord's coming. It is Christ assembling and judging living people. Nothing can be more opposed to the precious truth, that every believer now has everlasting life, is a child of God, is passed from death unto life, than the false idea of God's children going to be judged. That every believer will appear before the judgment seat, or *bema*, of Christ is quite true; but there will be no question of salvation then, but of reward for service; and we shall appear there like Christ in glorified bodies.

It is most blessed, then, to see that God teaches us that death and judgment have been already met for us by Jesus on the cross,

and that which is before us is not, as some say, a day of judgment, a great assize, to decide who shall be saved and who not; for I affirm that Scripture nowhere teaches *us* to expect that, but to expect Christ. Hence Heb. 9:28 concludes with, and

to them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

There will be no question with Christ and believers about sin, and therefore not of its consequences -- death and judgment. Christ will then put forth His redemption power on our bodies, and thus not only give us full and everlasting deliverance from sorrow and all the consequences of sin, but, in a moment, change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto His glorious body, so that we may have full capacities for ceaseless and untiring enjoyment of Himself. Blessed hope indeed! Precious portion! now children of God, delivered from death and judgment, and having the blessed hope of being for ever with the Lord, and for ever like Him! The believer is therefore instructed to look back on the cross, and see that Christ there *put away* his sins, and delivered him from death and judgment; to look up to the throne, and see Jesus now appearing in God's presence for him, his righteousness and great High Priest; and to look for His coming to bring him into eternal enjoyment with Himself.

In a moment, like a lightning flash, and the twinkling of an eye, He will change these vile bodies, and then at once our grateful hearts, loosed for ever from every bond, will burst forth in one eternal anthem of praise --

Worthy is the Lamb {Rev. 5:12}.

Now, if we sing a few hymns, nature grows weary, and admonishes us that it is enough; but *then* it will be untiring and unending worship and delight in the Lord Jesus. We even *now* feel that nothing is comparable to Jesus. If the world were to pile up all its wealth, or gather together all its pleasures, or concentrate all its honors, and present them to a child of God, his reply would be -- Jesus only can satisfy me.

I ask you then, dear friends, have you delight in Jesus? Is He precious to your souls? He is the Father's delight, and all intelligences in heaven are in subjection to Him. If you, then, cannot find delight in the Lord Jesus, how can you be fit for the Father's company? Christ loves me; He loved me when dead in trespasses and sins. I know this; therefore I can say,

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly {Rev. 22:20}!

His coming again has no terror for me, but delight. Oh, how blessed it will be to find oneself in a moment brought into a region of eternal life, eternal love, eternal glory, and, more than that, to have capacities for its unceasing enjoyment! How blessed, then, is the promise, that

unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation {Heb. 9:28}.

The Pharisee and the Publican

Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:10-14).

The Lord knew what was in man. His words were powerful and heart-searching. He always distinguished between the lip-service of outward formality, and the inward exercise of the conscience before God. In that day, like the present, many erred because they knew not the Scriptures, nor the power of God; they believed not the truth of man's total ruin and depravity; consequently they were constantly thinking of doing something to secure the favour of God, or of bringing something of creature-merit for acceptance, instead of confessing themselves to be lost, undone sinners, and justly deserving His eternal wrath. The people, therefore, could not understand Jesus; they saw no beauty in Him; they were continually mistaking His words, and perceived not that He was exactly suited to do them good, because He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

In the chapter before us, our blessed Lord was addressing the Pharisees. The subject of His discourse was prayer. He exposed their hypocritical way of approaching God, and showed the amazing difference between saying prayers and true prayer. Their prayers might have general approval among men, but what were they in the sight of God? He had just spoken of the ungodliness that would characterize the world when the Son of man is revealed so destitute would it be of vital reality, that it could only be compared to the days before the flood, and the days of Lot. He then set before them the parable of the

unjust judge {Luke 18:6},

teaching them that

men ought always to pray, and not to faint {Luke 18:1};

assuring them also that God is the hearer of prayer, and cannot but avenge His own elect in answer to their cries; and asked the most solemn question,

When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth? {Luke 18:8}

But while thus giving expression to the doctrine, that

men ought always to pray,

He set before them, in the parable of the Pharisee and publican, the great contrast between formal lip-service and true prayer.

This must have been a powerful appeal to the consciences of the self-righteous. Most men acknowledge that they should pray. Not to pray is an omission that people generally would condemn; indeed, it is almost a law among all nations, that everybody should pray. Idolaters invoke their gods. Mohammedans have fixed hours for saying their prayers. Socinians own that people should pray. Jews say prayers. Roman Catholics repeat prayers. Pharisees make long prayers for a pretence; and Saul of Tarsus excelled in

this religion; but after he had seen the Lord Jesus, it was said of him,

Behold, he prayeth {Acts 9:11}!

A prayerless soul is in a sadly infidel state; for surely it is the duty of every intelligent creature to acknowledge the goodness of the Creator. But there is a difference between a prayerless man, and a man who owns God as his Creator and Benefactor; yet both may be dead in trespasses and sins. The former is infidel, not owning God more than the unintelligent brute; the latter acknowledges God in his ways of creation and providence, yet, failing to own God's grace in redemption, he is still unpardoned and unsaved. Many will speak of the kindness of God in providence, who believe not the glorious gospel of Christ for salvation, and are, therefore, still in their sins -- condemned already.

For this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil {see John 3:19}.

He that believeth on THE SON hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not THE SON shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:19, 36).

The parable of the Pharisee and publican presents to us a most striking sketch of the two classes of persons which are spread over a large portion of the globe; namely, those who make prayers, and those who really pray, and is accompanied with the Divine estimate of both.

Outwardly, there was a great similarity between the Pharisee and the publican. The Gentile idolater might have seen both wending their way to the same temple; they both went to pray; they both began their prayers with "God"; in the eyes of men they were both pursuing the same object; unlike those who were without, they were inner-court worshipers. Like the mere formalist and real Christian now, there is often outwardly little difference, but, in God's esteem, how very wide the contrast!

1. Let us consider the PHARISEE. I think I see him with his broad phylactery, hastening through the crowded streets, often gratified by salutations of "Rabbi"; stopping now and then at the corner to repeat his accustomed prayer, and out-stripping many a broken-hearted publican. At length he approaches the holy temple. How boldly he enters! How unhesitatingly he walks straight up to the innermost part of the holy place! How erect he stands! How often his eye glances on the gazing multitude, to be sure that he has secured their admiration and esteem! and how scornfully he views the weeping sinners that surround him! Then begins his prayer,

God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I

fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess {Luke 18:11, 12}.

Such is the Pharisee's prayer. We are told that he

prayed thus with himself {Luke 18:11};

all the resources of self are therefore called to his aid: hence his prayer is full of self -- self-exaltation, self-love, self-righteousness.

He says,

I thank thee -- I am not as other men -- I fast -- I give -- I possess.

All through his prayer "*I*" stands most prominent. Self, whatever form it may assume, can never rise above self. He thanks God that he is better than others. How is it that he is better than other men? Is it not that his fasting and alms-giving have accomplished this? Then why thank God? Is it not like Cain's offering of those fruits of the ground that his own hand had cultivated, and which had been matured by Divine aid? Yes, this is the delusion of Pharisaism. It is the cultivation of self, but professedly by Divine help. It is not salvation; it is not the cleansing of the guilty conscience; but the outward trimming of the corrupt tree which cannot bring forth good fruit, and sets at nought the gospel declaration, that

except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God {John 3:3}.

The Pharisee thanks God he is not as other men. God declares that all have sinned, all have gone astray, all are guilty before Him, and that

as face answereth to face in water, so doth the heart of man to man {see Prov. 27:19}.

It is quite possible that the Pharisee might have been preserved from the outward sins which the publican had so long pursued, and which many around him were frequently revelling in; but he little thought that

God seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart {see 1 Sam. 16:7}.

The Pharisee knew not the sin of honoring God with his lips, while his heart was far from Him. What was the state of the Pharisee's heart? He spoke as if he were righteous, and had never sinned. This was not true; for the Scripture saith,

There is none righteous, no, not one {Rom. 3:10},

and that we are all as an unclean thing, conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity. His thought, like that of many now, was, that it was only outward things that defiled the man; whereas our Lord said that it was the evil things from within that defiled the man:

For out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and they defile the man {see Mark 7:21-23}.

Was not the Pharisee, then, an "extortioner" in heart? Had he not, times without number, desired and obtained God's providential mercies, under the pretence of honoring God, when it had really been for self-exaltation in the sight of men? Was he not "unjust" not to credit the testimony of the holy and true Son of God? Was

he not an "adulterer" in heart, in pretending affection for God, calling the living and true God his God, while he was wholly set on exalting and adoring self? Oh deluded Pharisee! Oh unregenerate, unpardoned, sinful man! how hath Satan blinded thine eyes! how hath thine own evil heart deceived thee! Well hath the Lord said of thee,

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity {Matt. 23:27, 28}.

Such is the Pharisee's prayer. There was no sense of need expressed; no expectation of receiving any thing from God; no felt unworthiness; no repentance; no confession of sin. His thought was that God required something from him, and he flattered himself that he was competent to meet it. He knew not the truth, that

God is not worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He *giveth* to all life, and breath, and all things; -- and, commandeth all men everywhere to repent {Acts 17:25; 29}.

2. Now look at THE PUBLICAN. Here you see a man exercised, not about what he is in the sight of men, but what he is before God; and this is always the way of the Holy Spirit in the soul. The publican knows it is to God, from whom no secrets are hid, that he must give an account. With a trembling step and an aching heart he enters the temple. He feels deep contrition, and is bowed down under a sense of unworthiness of the least of God's mercies, and

standing afar off {Luke 18:13},

the question with him is, How can I approach God? for

"The best obedience of my hands
Dares not appear before His throne."

He knows that he is

a sinner {Luke 18:13},

that he has actually transgressed against God's laws. He is self-convicted, and therefore self-abased. His past acts of covetousness and extortion stare him in the face, and he is conscious that all sin is really "against God."

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight {Psa. 51:4},

is the utterance of his heart. He feels he cannot look up, not even lift up so much as his eyes to heaven {Luke 18:13};

for he knows God is holy and just, that He will by no means clear the guilty, and has power to destroy both body and soul in hell, and he is deeply conscious of having broken His commands. But, more than this, He traces sin to its source. He laid his trembling hand upon his heart,

he smote upon his breast {see Luke 18:13},

as much as to say, What horrid thoughts, vile desires, and abominable suggestions, lurk within this breast! O wretched man that I am! O foul transgressor! ungrateful enemy to God! What

mercies have been vouchsafed to me! what a kind Benefactor! yet how rebellious and disobedient have I been, to have wasted my time, health, strength, and every other talent in selfish objects; yea, even using the Almighty's gifts to seek happiness and glory, apart from the Giver. What ungodliness! what sin! But language fails to describe these workings of the Spirit in the conscience.

The question, then, in the publican's heart is, Can such
a sinner

be saved? Is there any hope of salvation for one so deserving God's wrath? If there be, he is convinced it can only be in God Himself; for the experience he has had of his own weakness and vileness excludes all hope from himself. The only possibility is in Divine mercy. Can God, will God, be merciful to *such* a sinner? He has heard that God is merciful, and he feels that mercy only can meet his need; but he cries --

"Depth of mercy, can there be
Mercy still reserved for *me*?"

This is his anxious inquiry. He, however, ventures; he casts himself on free, unmerited love; his cry is,

God, be merciful to me a sinner {Luke 18:13}!

Mark the character of this prayer:

1st, His supplication is to "God."

2nd, He acknowledges his guilt as "a sinner."

3rd, His only ground of expectation is in Divine mercy -- "be merciful."

4th, His deep, heartfelt personal necessity --

be merciful to *me* {Luke 18:13}.

He brings nothing but a load of sin to be removed, a conscience oppressed with guilt to be cleansed, an agonizing breast to be comforted, a needy soul to be filled. He presents no creature-merit to God, and he expects everything from God. He feels, if God does not save him, he is lost for ever:

God be merciful to me a sinner {Luke 18:13}!

How widely different are the two prayers! The self-exalting Pharisee needs nothing, the self-abased publican needs everything; the one is ensnared in the trammels of dead formality, the other is under the influence of spiritual life.

3. THE DIVINE VERDICT. Having set before us a sample of these two wide-spread classes of persons which have been in the world ever since the days of Cain, our blessed Lord then tells us that the publican

went down to his house JUSTIFIED {Luke 18:14}.

This is clearly the meaning of the passage. It is not that the Pharisee was in any degree justified; but comparing the two persons, the publican could be spoken of as JUSTIFIED. How blessed! What a glorious unfolding of the riches of the grace of God! A self-condemned sinner, thus casting himself on the free, sovereign mercy of God, JUSTIFIED! And surely this has always been God's way. In the days of Job, Elihu was instructed by the Spirit to say of the Almighty,

He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not, He

will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light {Job 33:27, 28}.

But to be justified means not only forgiven, but to be accounted righteous -- to be just before God. To this end Christ died and rose again.

He who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him {see 2 Cor. 5:21}.

Thus Jesus, by His finished work, has not only delivered His people from guilt, but fitted them for glory; hence the Colossian believers were enjoined to

give thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins {Col. 1:12-14}.

This is the work that Jesus came forth from the Father to accomplish,

that He might present to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing {Eph. 5:27}.

This is the mercy of God to sinful man. He justifies the ungodly that believe; and this He is able to do consistently with His own holiness and justice, through the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The only sacrifice for sin had not been offered when Jesus put forth this parable. He tells us on another occasion that He was straitened,

that is, that He was unable fully to tell out the grace and peace of God to lost, sinful man, until His death had actually taken place. He said,

I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished (Luke 12:50).

But God's purposes and thoughts of redeeming mercy have always been the same. He could account Abel, Noah, Abraham, righteous by faith, by looking forward to the cross, as much as He now justifies a sinner who looks back on Christ's already accomplished work. By Christ, all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39). But further. Our Lord adds to this parable the Divine statute, that

every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted {Luke 18:14}.

On two other occasions our Lord put forth the same solemn declaration; but both were in reference to seeking honor and distinction among men. Here, however, He sets it before His hearers as a doctrine of eternal importance. Every one that exalteth himself, by professing to stand on the ground of carnal confidence, self-righteousness, and self-importance, can only be judged by God as worthy of eternal banishment from His presence. To stand before God without the wedding garment, without that spotless and infinitely perfect righteousness that Christ is to every one that believeth, is to be exposed to the just indignation of the King of kings, who must abase such, and whose sentence must be,

Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth {Matt. 22:13}.

How deep, how eternally full of bitter anguish will that abasing be! On the other hand,

He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

Such do not contend for their own opinion about the things of God; they boast not of their own abilities or attainments; they believe that

God is greater than man {Job 33:12};

they lay aside their own thoughts; they give God His due place; they incline their ear to Him, and hearken to His word. Taught by His Spirit, and enlightened by the word of truth, they acknowledge that all their righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and confess that they are unclean and undone. Such God will exalt; for

He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory {1 Sam. 2:8}.

In this present life, they receive a garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and the oil of joy for mourning; they are consciously exalted from the degraded gratifications of carnal lusts to the enjoyment of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ; even now they are exalted from the slavery of Satan's bondage to liberty and sonship in the presence of God; and when the Lord Jesus shall come again, while many are left behind for His terribly abasing judgments, they shall be exalted to share His throne of glory. They shall see His face, be like Him, and share His glory for ever. How high, how holy, how perfect, and unchangeably happy will this exaltation be!

Now, dear reader, let me affectionately ask you solemnly to ponder these things. Are you a prayerless soul? Do you eat, and drink, and enjoy the bounties of God in nature and providence, without ever bowing your knees to Him in acknowledgment of His mercies? Is it really so? Then wherein do you differ from the poor heathen, or from

the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth? {Eccl. 3:21}.

You say, I make no profession! What! God blesses you day by day with such providential mercies, and, far beyond all that, has sent His only-begotten Son to die for sinners, and save them from the wrath to come, by shedding His own precious blood, and yet you make no profession! as if such wondrous love and grace were beneath your dignity to notice! Fie! fie! my reader! Repent at once, turn to God, and accept pardon for thine ingratitude and sin, through the atoning death, the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But perhaps my reader may say, "I am not a prayerless person. I could not lie down at night, or get up in the morning, without saying my accustomed prayers. I never commence a meal without repeating grace, and I must own that God has greatly blessed me in my family, business, and property." Ah, my dear reader, all this may be quite true; but about your soul -- your soul -- your undying soul! Are you not resting in your accustomed religious duties, and owning God in His dealings with you in

providence, but not owning the mercy of God in saving sinners by the death of His Son, thus neglecting your soul's salvation? Oh! what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? You may acknowledge God, but do you believe in His Son Jesus Christ, as a lost sinner, for the salvation of your soul? This is the all-important question.

But some of my readers may say, "Neither of these describes my case. I try to pray, and cannot. I am often afraid to sleep at night, lest I should awake in hell; and when sometimes I see the lightning flash, and hear the thunder roar, I fear it may be Christ coming in judgment to cut me off. I had serious impressions when a child; but they passed away, and I lived in sin for many years. Others speak of happiness, but I spend weeks and months in sorrow. Sometimes I feel better, and then again sin and guilt are fastened deeper than ever upon my conscience. I have been advised to attach myself to some church (as it is called); but knowing that a profession without the power of godliness is abominable in the sight of God, and feeling that it is inward peace, a sense of forgiveness of sins and acceptance with God, that I need, I have always declined."

My reader! if this be thy experience, the Holy Spirit hath been working in thy heart. He proclaims in the gospel the free mercy of God, full forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness, and salvation to the uttermost, to every sinner that cometh to God through Christ.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved {Acts 16:31}.

Take thy stand at Calvary's cross; there read in the shedding of His blood the unutterable mercy of God to sinners. Doubt no more. Lift thy soul to heaven's throne of grace where Jesus is. Confess thyself to be a lost sinner, take the living God at His word, rely only upon the Savior's death for acceptance and peace, and thy groans will soon be turned to praise, and thy burdened heart be filled with songs of joy.

Once more! Remember that Jesus Christ came into the world to SAVE -- who? Not *righteous* persons, but SINNERS!

The Cleansing of the Leper

Leviticus 14:1-8.

The ordinance in Israel of the cleansing of the leper gives us a touching picture of God's way of cleansing a sinner, and bringing him back into His own blessed presence to worship and serve before Him.

Leprosy was a remarkable type of sin. It entirely unfitted a man for the presence of God. His place was

without the camp {Lev. 13:46}.

Whether he had few spots or many, he was pronounced utterly unclean {Lev. 13:44}.

All that he could therefore truly say of himself was, Unclean, unclean {Lev. 13:45}.

The disease was most defiling. God alone could make a leper clean, and fit to come into the camp.

The true place therefore of a leper was outside the camp of Israel, outside every thing of God -- His presence, His service, His worship; with rent garments, head uncovered, and upper lip tied up, calling out,

Unclean!

lest any coming near should contract defilement.

It is well for any now who take this self-loathing place, as without God, unclean, and undone before Him, unfit for His presence. Surely it is the only true place; for we are told, that

they that are in the flesh cannot please God {Rom. 8:8},

that all

are guilty before Him {see Rom. 3:19}.

God, however, could meet the leper in this foul and hopeless condition, and bring him back into the camp cleansed, and fit for His presence. And in this ordinance we see great principles shadowed forth, as to the way in which God has met us in our sin and guilt, fitted us for His own blessed presence, and made us to find rest and peace before Him in love.

1st. THE LEPER WAS BROUGHT UNTO THE PRIEST (Lev. 13:2). Wherever else he went, or to whatever person, it would be wholly unavailing. Out of all the people in the world, this one, and he only, had power from God to deal with the leprosy, and pronounce him clean. So we know that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus only is the way, and the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by Him. The sinner must have to do with the Lord Jesus about his sins, or be outside God's presence for ever. There is salvation in no other. Jesus says,

Come {Matt. 11:28}!

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37}.

How clear and encouraging this is!

2ndly. HE WAS EXAMINED BY THE PRIEST --

The priest shall look and behold if the plague of leprosy be healed {Lev. 14:3}.

The leper stood with his leprous spots exposed to the scrutinizing eye of God's priest. Dealing with God, through Christ, about our sin is no light matter. It is a deeply solemn experience, to fall under the searching eye of God in His infinitely holy presence. To feel oneself a sinner *before a sin-hating God*, can only be endured by the knowledge of the fact that He is a sinner-loving God; for all things are naked and open before Him. There is not a secret thing which is not wholly uncovered before His eye.

3rd. CLEANSING ONLY BY THE DEATH OF ANOTHER. The leper had to learn at this solemn moment, that he could be cleansed only by a sacrifice being offered. A live bird was therefore taken, and *killed* over running or living water; for the death of Christ is connected with the outflowing of eternal life. And surely God teaches the soul that is exercised about his sins before Him, that it is only by the death of Christ that he can be brought to stand in acceptance with Him; for

without blood-shedding there is no remission {Heb. 9:22}.

The leper saw, in the suffering and death of the bird, God's way of meeting him in order to cleanse him from his uncleanness. So it is only by the death of Jesus, the Son of God, that the sinner finds peace with God, and cleansing of sin;

for Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18).

Then he saw the living bird, with cedar wood, scarlet, and hyssop, dipped into the blood of the dead bird: thus in a figure the dead bird is identified with the living bird, in order to be a type of Him who was dead and is alive again, and that for evermore. The dignity or majesty, incorruptibility, perfect humility, and other characteristics of Christ, may be typified by the scarlet, and cedar wood, and hyssop, to show us the infinite power and efficacy of His precious blood.

4th. THE SPRINKLING OF BLOOD. There the leper stood looking at God's work for him, and then receiving God's remedy, and hearing God's sentence. He did nothing to merit any good, but received all from the God of Israel. Feeling his utter uncleanness and unfitness for God's presence, his mouth was stopped, while the priest sprinkled the blood upon him seven times, and

pronounced him clean {see Lev. 14:7}.

This is most blessed. It touchingly shows us that salvation is of the Lord. It gave perfect assurance to the leper, and left no room for a question. Whatever he felt, or others suggested, he had the consciousness that he was under the power of the blood; and, through that alone, God's Priest had

pronounced him clean.

And so the believer now, who simply has to do with Christ -- God's only Savior -- about his sins, is entitled to perfect peace, entirely on the ground that Christ died for our sins, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; for God's *word* declares we are *now* justified by His blood (Rom. 5:9). We are thus *pronounced clean*.

5th. THE LIVING BIRD IS THEN LET LOOSE, to prefigure a risen Savior.

After he had purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high {see Heb. 1:3}.

So that the resurrection and ascension of Christ give perfect assurance that God was fully satisfied with Christ's atoning work, and that He saw in His death upon the cross an answer to every claim of Divine holiness and justice, and the complete blotting out of the sins of His people. It was not possible that He should be holden {held by} of death -- His flesh saw no corruption; but he was counted worthy of all glory, because he had so fully glorified the Father on the earth, and finished, the work that He gave Him to do. Until the leper was cleansed, the living bird was detained; but the efficacy of the dead one being fully attested by the leper being pronounced clean, it was

let loose into the open field {see Lev. 14:7}.

What peace and comfort this must have ministered to the poor leper! and what perfect rest of soul the knowledge of Christ risen from the dead and gone into heaven gives us! Surely we can sing

--

"Clean every whit," Thou saidst it, Lord;
Shall one suspicion lurk?
Thine surely is a faithful word,
And Thine a finished work."

6th. THE LEPER CLEANSED HIMSELF. After he was pronounced clean, he cleansed himself and came into the camp. He washed his clothes, shaved off all his hair, and washed himself, and in this way came into the camp. So the believer that has had to do with God about his sins, and has the enjoyment of present forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Jesus, has no confidence in the flesh; he sees that he himself in the flesh is thoroughly unclean, that every thing connected with him naturally is unclean also, and that all his natural comeliness, all that he formerly gloried in, cannot bear the light of God's presence. But he acknowledges it unclean and unfit for God's eye, and sees it all cleansed by the word of God, which testifies to the everlasting efficacy of the blood of Jesus.

Now,
said Jesus,

ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you
{John 15:3}.

Made nigh in Christ Jesus, and through His blood, we can, by the Spirit, enjoy God's presence, worship the Father, and serve Him acceptably.

The Good Samaritan

And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise (Luke 10:25-37).

Christ came into the world to save sinners. He died for the ungodly. Prophets had repeatedly declared that

salvation is of the Lord {Jonah 2:9},

and had long spoken of Jehovah as

a just God and a Saviour {Isa. 45:21}.

The gospel prominently sets this forth. He was called Jesus or Savior, because He would

save His people from their sins {Matt. 1:21};

and when the angel of the Lord announced His birth to the shepherds, he said,

Unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord {Luke 2:11}.

Jesus Himself taught His disciples that He came,

not to destroy men's lives, but to save them {Luke 9:56};

and when a sin-convicted woman received Him as such, He pronounced her

saved {Luke 7:50};

and when another joyfully received Him, He declared,

This day is salvation come to this house {Luke 19:9}.

Paul testified that the grace of God bringeth salvation, and He counted it

a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners {1 Tim. 1:15}.

How blessed is the contemplation of the fact, that God still proclaims salvation for the chief of sinners, through the atoning death of Christ! Well may we sing --

"Salvation! let the echo fly
The spacious earth around;
While all the armies of the sky
Conspire to raise the sound.

"Salvation! O thou bleeding Lamb,
To thee the praise belongs;
Salvation shall inspire our hearts,
And dwell upon our tongues."

It is the fact of God having provided a Savior for sinners that so richly manifests divine love, and when received into the heart by faith, the ruined and lost become attracted to the bosom of God. No one ever could have conceived that God had such love for sinful man as Jesus revealed. To condemn sin in His only-begotten Son, that He might bring us to glory, instead of eternally condemning us, as we so justly deserved, was such a deep thought of unutterable love as the cross of Christ alone could fully set forth.

No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him {John 4:18}.

Man's estimate of God generally is, that He is a hard master, demanding and expecting great things from him; hence, when he thinks of God at all, it is commonly associated with the idea of bringing something to God, instead of receiving from Him. Paul met this thought in the idolatrous Athenians, by telling them that

God is not worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He *giveth* to all life, and breath, and all things {see Acts 17:25}.

It is this proud thought of man's ability that is such an impenetrable barrier to the entrance of the gospel into the heart, and it is this that the Spirit of God breaks down, by convincing men of their sinfulness and need of a Savior, and showing them that righteousness is to be had only by faith in Him, who is now at the right hand of God.

It is recorded that, on more than one occasion, persons came to Jesus in this erroneous condition of mind. Their enquiry was about doing something to entitle them to eternal life; which served, in the case before us, as a fit opportunity for our Lord to unfold the difference between law and gospel, and to show that He came, not to call the righteous, but to seek and to save that which was lost.

The touching parable of the good Samaritan was drawn forth by the lawyer's self-righteous enquiry. In the darkness of deep ignorance and idle curiosity, he tempted the Lord with this question:

What shall I do to inherit eternal life? {Luke 10:25}.

The point was about doing something to entitle to life; our Savior, therefore, could only refer him to what God had written in the law of Moses, in which it had been repeatedly declared, that the man that doeth these things shall live in them. The vain confidence of this enquirer was best met by thus directing him to God's own standard of righteousness; for when men suppose that they are capable of doing that which will entitle them to eternal life, the just balance of God's law and testimony can alone determine the question. Our Lord's reply, therefore, was --

What is written in the law? how readest thou? {Luke 10:26}

The lawyer's response showed that, like many in the present day, he was acquainted with the letter of the law, while he knew nothing of its killing, condemning power, in laying bare the conscience, and exposing to his view the depravity of his own evil heart. He unhesitatingly answered,

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself {Luke 10:27};

to which our Lord replied,

Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live {Luke 10:28}.

Thus the righteous balance of God's holy law was brought forth, and the only question was, whether the lawyer, if weighed, would be

found wanting {Dan. 5:27}.

He drew forth the required standard himself, and the question was, Did it pronounce him righteous, and entitled to life? or did it prove him to

have sinned, and come short of the glory of God {Rom. 3:23}?

for the heart-searching demand of that law was, to

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbour as thyself {Luke 10:27}.

Thus perfection of devotedness to God, unceasing and unfailing in its continuance, with self-sacrifice for our neighbour's benefit, were involved in the law. Is it not strange that the lawyer did not fall down before such demands, pricked in his heart, and exclaim,

God be merciful to me a sinner {Luke 18:13}?

But he did not. So blind and ignorant is the natural man, that he perceives nothing spiritually, except the Holy Ghost enlighten his understanding and open his heart! The lawyer was still

willing to justify himself {Luke 10:29}.

How great is the blindness of the human heart! But has it not always been the way of man to seek to excuse and justify himself? Do we not see multitudes around us, having the law of Moses on their lips, but so destitute of the sense of its perfect requirements as to attempt self-justification, by endeavouring to scrape together a righteousness by that very law which so thoroughly proves them to be transgressors, as to be to them a ministration of condemnation and death, so that

every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God {Rom. 3:19}?

Such is the law. Its demands are strict, its measure perfect, its standard unalterable, inflicting death on the transgressor, without any promise of mercy. Holy, just, and good in itself, but capable of showing man's sinfulness, without giving him life or righteousness; for the Scripture saith,

If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain {Gal. 2:21}.

Who, then, can lay claim to life on the ground of the law? Who can say, I am clean, I am pure, I have never transgressed thy commands at any time? Blessed be God, there was One who could say,

I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do {John 17:4}.

Yes,

He magnified the law, and made it honourable {see Isa. 42:21, especially New Trans., JND};

He loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His mind, and with all His strength; and He proved that He loved His neighbour as Himself, by redeeming him with His own precious blood.

Though the lawyer was so willing to

justify himself {Luke 10:29},

yet he failed to do so, for he was standing before the light of truth; and the proposed question,

Who is my neighbour? {Luke 10:29}

seems to imply that he had some misgiving about being able to meet this part of the law's demands; and when the Lord drew a picture of one loving a neighbour as himself, and added,

Go and do likewise {Luke 10:37},

the lawyer was unable to ask any more questions, for guilt of conscience, under the power of God's holy truth, stopped his mouth. If his heart were opened to receive the blessed instruction set before him, he could not have failed to feel self-condemned, in coming so far short of God's standard of righteousness, and would have perceived in the parable, that Christ had drawn a life-like portrait of himself in the fallen, naked, wounded, needy, half-dead traveller; and that He that was speaking to him was the neighbor ready to bind up his wounds, and pour peace and joy into his wounded conscience. Thus he would be taught the true secret of the gospel, that while he could not

inherit eternal life {Luke 10:25}

by doing, nevertheless it could be had

without money and without price {Isa. 55:1},

from the Savior of sinners, as the free gift of God.

In contemplating the parable, we may notice:

1. Man's fallen and helpless condition.
2. The inability of law or ordinances to meet his need.
3. The depth and suitability of the Savior's love.
4. The security and prospects of the healed and rescued sinner.

1. MAN'S FALLEN AND HELPLESS CONDITION is most strikingly set before us in the wounded man.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead {Luke 10:30}.

We are reminded here that man is a fallen creature. God made him upright, and pronounced him, with every other part of creation,

very good {Gen. 1:31}.

He was a stranger to guilt, and knew nothing of death's terrible sting; he was clothed with innocence, and no stain had ever soiled his pure mind. But the great enemy came to him, and he disobeyed God's command. This is sin; and in this way he was stripped of his robe of spotless purity; he was sensible of his wickedness, he felt the deep wounds of fear and guilt, and knew that death claimed him, without having any prospect of deliverance. As the Scripture saith,

By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned {Rom. 5:12}.

Thus man is a fallen creature, and he is also

without strength {Rom. 5:6};

he is gone astray from God, and sin reigns in him unto death. All mankind are alike in this respect, all are naked, wounded, helpless, needy sinners. It is very important to see this, because it withers up all thoughts of creature ability, makes us conscious of being outside Eden's blessings, and lays us prostrate by the wayside, helpless, and sinking under the effects of the mortal wounds we have received. Our birth-condition, being a fallen one, teaches us the absolute necessity of being

born again {John 3:7},

and shows us the correctness of the Divine verdict, that

the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint {Isa. 1:5},

and that

from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores {Isa. 1:6}.

How humiliating to the proud, self-sufficient lawyer, could he have traced his own portrait in this picture of the traveller by the wayside, naked, fainting, gasping, lingering in helplessness and misery, without any resources for healing or comfort, and without a friend to help or sympathize, till the Savior of sinners came where he was. Ah! man may boast of his noble faculties, and vast capabilities, as if he were unfallen; but what is he in the sight of God? How does the pure light of heavenly truth manifest him? What is he when weighed in the balance of the sanctuary? What can be more humbling than the Lord's concise description,

stripped, wounded,

and

half-dead {Luke 10:30}!

This is God's verdict, and this, I am sure, every Spirit-taught conscience acknowledges as true and righteous altogether.

2. THE INABILITY OF LAW OR ORDINANCES TO MEET MAN'S NEED. Redemption by grace was an eternal purpose in the heart of God. The Lamb was fore-ordained before the foundation of the

world; and when God pronounced the promise of redemption, there was no reference to the law. It was not until 400 years after the call of Abraham that the law was given, and the reason of its being given was to make sin manifest.

The law entered that the offence might abound {Rom. 5:20}.

Hence we read;

By chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side {Luke 10:31}.

This legal official had no remedy for the fallen and helpless, and he could only be a witness to the fact, that there was a

wounded,

half-dead

traveller there. The man needed life, peace, healing, salvation, which the priest under the law was unable to minister; he therefore

passed by on the other side.

The Levite was equally unable to meet his need; for he had no healing balm for a sin-wounded conscience. His sacrifices only brought sin to remembrance, and could not give remission; --

for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins {Heb. 10:4}.

He therefore only

looked

on the dying sinner,

passed by on the other side {Luke 10:32},

and became another witness that man was

stripped,

wounded,

and under sentence of death, needing remission of sins. Thus we see something of what man's real state before God is, and what a united testimony there is to his being a fallen and helpless sinner, and the inability of rites or ceremonies to meet his need. Sad indeed would it be, if the Divine record stopped here; but, blessed be God, it does not; for our deep necessity has been God's opportunity of displaying the riches of His grace in the perfect salvation of those who could not save themselves. He loved us *while we were yet sinners*. And --

"Though our nature's fall in Adam
Seemed to shut us out from God,
Thus it was His counsel brought us
Nearer still, through Jesus' blood."

3. This leads us to consider next, THE DEPTH AND SUITABILITY OF THE SAVIOR'S LOVE, so blessedly presented to us in His own ways and words; and standing in the widest contrast with the cold, heartless look of the Priest and Levite.

But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine {Luke 10:33, 34}.

This is what the half-dead traveller needed. It suited such a helpless one. It exactly met his case. Nothing less would do.

Nothing more could be desired. What unutterable grace! How great, how free, how deep, the love of Christ to ruined sinners! Deep indeed, for He came down to us where we were, in our sins, guilt, and ruin. He had compassion, and brought healing and salvation. He saw the depth of our wounds, He beheld the misery and helplessness we were in, and His loving heart so flowed out with compassion, that when nothing less than the tremendous agony, suffering, and death of the cross would deliver us from wrath, He freely laid down His life for us, even when we were dead in sins. The Holy Savior was willingly made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him; and now, being raised from the dead, He lives at God's right hand, to be a Prince and a Savior, to give remission of sins. His blood has been shed for undone, guilty sinners, and His blood gives peace to the wounded conscience. His blood can heal the broken heart, and He is to us a better robe than unfallen man ever knew; even

the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ,
unto all and upon all them that believe {Rom. 3:22}.

This is what Jesus gives. The testimony of the God of truth to the value of Christ's death is the oil and wine that He pours into the troubled soul. When the Holy Spirit bears witness to the broken heart, of the law being fulfilled, its curse borne, sins purged, and death under the judgment of God endured by His Son for the sinner, so that now there is full liberty for those who believe to enter into the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, this is like oil and wine poured into the sinking soul, filling it with joy and peace. What amazing kindness! What sovereign love! How deep! How suitable! But who can speak of its power and virtue, but the wounded that have been healed by the loving Savior?

"Nothing but thy blood, O Jesus,
Could relieve us from our smart;
Nothing else from guilt release us,
Nothing else can melt the heart.

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

4. THE SECURITY AND PROSPECTS OF THE HEALED AND RESCUED SINNER. Christ saves to the uttermost. He not only begins a good work, but He perfects it. He not only cleanses, but brings nigh to God, and by His Spirit unites us to Himself. He met us as beggars on the dunghill, and set us among princes. He quickened us when dead in sins, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ. We thus become His for ever. And so we read, that after the wounded man had been bound up, and oil and wine had been poured in,

he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee {Luke 10:34, 35}.

The security of the healed man was, that the Samaritan had exalted him from the wayside to his own seat --

set him on his own beast,

and undertook to care for him, making provision for the whole time of his absence from him; and the blessed prospect before him was the hope of his coming again. We might enlarge to show the responsibility of the Church, symbolized by the inn, to care for the lambs of the Lord's flock; but we can now simply refer to it. The Samaritan's care of the restored man is brought out, not only in the statement that he

took care of him,

but also in committing him to the ministration of others, on whom he had bestowed gifts for the service, saying,

Take care of him.

The knowledge that the kind friend, who had so mercifully rescued him from death, had made arrangements for the supply of all his present and future need must have been very consoling, and calculated to deliver from all fear and distrust; while the expectation of his coming again could not fail to be an object of the deepest interest. When the shepherd found the lost sheep, and laid him on his shoulders, the security of the sheep was, that he was borne up by the strong arm of the good shepherd. The security of Noah when he entered the ark was, that

God shut him in {Gen. 7:16}.

The security of the children of Israel, when the destroying angel came in judgment, was the blood of the lamb sprinkled on their lintel and door-posts. And so now the security of the believer is, that he is in Christ, justified by His blood, upheld before God by the perfect love and almighty power of the great High Priest. Most blessed is it for every true believer in the Lord Jesus to know that

by one offering he is perfected for ever {see Heb. 10:14},
and that God hath made Christ to be unto him

wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and
redemption {1 Cor. 1:30}.

In Christ he has life, righteousness, and completeness, and can never be separated from His love. Christ will care for him continually, help in difficulty, comfort in sorrow, restore when erring, and lead him into paths of righteousness, for His name's sake. Christ, who died for him, ever intercedes for him, and will come again for him. Christ dwells in him, and he dwells in Christ, and the love, wisdom, work, worth, and power of Christ are all for him.

"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever;
Nothing from His love can sever."

Such is the believer's security, and the bright prospect of his soul is, that Jesus will come again, and receive him unto Himself. He knows that the same Jesus, who went into heaven, shall so come in like manner as the disciples saw Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11). He looks for the Savior, and loves His appearing. Then he knows that Christ will

see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied {Isa. 53:11};

and he says,

As for me, I will behold His face in righteousness: I shall be
satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness {see Psa. 17:15}.

Time was when God's dear people were so living in the power of divine truth, that they

turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;
and to wait for His Son from heaven {1 Thess. 1:9, 10}.

Oh that we, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, were so much in love with Christ, so rejoicing in His finished work, so sensibly affected by His amazing grace, as to be continually rejoicing in hope of His coming!

But perhaps my reader is a stranger to grace. You are, it may be, so far dead, as not to be sensible of your naked, wounded, perilous state. Is it so? Then let me ask you to consider how you will bear the light and terrors of the judgment-seat, and be judged according to your works? Death steals slowly but surely over you, and will quickly hurl you far from the reach of mercy, to stand before God. But, dear fellow-sinner, you are naked, wounded, and dying, though you think little of it. Do ponder these things. God pronounces all to be guilty before Him. And is not Jesus, the Good Samaritan, able to heal you? Did He not die for the chief of sinners? Does He not delight to pardon iniquity? Does He not now come where you are with the sweet balm of His blessed gospel? Does not His precious blood cleanse from all sin? Does He refuse one sinner, however vile, that comes to Him? Then why not believe on Him to save you, that He may bind up your wounds, pour joy and peace into your soul, and make you happy in the present enjoyment of His perfect and unchanging love, with the joyful prospect of being with Him in glory for ever.

May God grant His blessing. Amen.

The Blood

“It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11).

The blood of Christ is the true ground of peace. When nothing else could save, God spared not His own Son. The death of Christ both satisfies the demands of law and justice, and saves the sinner that believes. It is only in the finished work of the cross that we see salvation for the lost. When Jesus shed His blood for the remission of sins, He glorified God, and opened a fountain for sin and for uncleanness.

Without shedding of blood is no remission {Heb. 9:22}.

Therefore it is written, that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul
{Lev. 17:11}.

The salvation of sinners has always been connected with blood-shedding and death. The reason is obvious. Sin's wages is death. The law of holiness and truth is, that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. Death, then, is God's just appointment to man, because he is a sinner. Man dies only because of sin. Death entered into the world by sin. The only way, therefore, of justly putting away sin was by death; and that no sinful man could die for the sin of another is clear, because he must die for himself. The Son of God, on whom death had no claim (because He knew no sin), was able to die for others. Nothing less than His death could save us, because we deserved death. Therefore, in matchless grace, Christ died for us -- the just for the unjust.

Christ died for our sins {1 Cor. 15:3};

and as the life of the flesh is in the blood, so the shedding of blood is spoken of, in Scripture language, as the laying down of life. Hence we are told that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul
{Lev. 17:11}.

The atoning blood God only provides. His love presents it to us; and the virtue of the blood is carefully recorded in the word of God from the earliest time of sin's entrance into the world. No sooner had Adam sinned than he had an evil conscience, and got away from God. He tried all he could to cover his nakedness, and to hide himself from the presence of his Maker. But God searched him out, and, instead of condemning him, promised a Redeemer to deliver him by having his heel bruised; and showed him that He could clothe him and his wife, though sinners, with coats, and bring them into the place of life and blessing by sacrifice. Thus God taught our first parents, and thus they learned that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Abel is next presented to us in the Scripture, as offering unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous. It was a life that he offered. He took of the firstlings of the flock. His sacrifice prefigured the blood-shedding and death of Jesus. Abel thus acknowledged that he was a sinner before God, justly exposed to death and judgment, but that he

rested only in the blood-shedding and death of the promised Redeemer, and thus

obtained witness that he was righteous {Heb. 11:4}.

In Noah's time, we also see that the blessing of God came down upon the earth because of the sweet savour of the clean beasts, which the patriarch offered in sacrifice to Jehovah. Judgment had been poured out by the windows of heaven being opened, and the fountains of the great deep being broken up; but when the clean sacrifices were offered, we are told that

the Lord smelled a sweet savour

-- a savour of rest;

and the Lord said, I will not again curse the ground any more
for man's sake, &c. {Gen. 21, 22}

Thus showing us that God can only find rest, since sin entered the world, in the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and that in this way only can He bless us. Here again we see the value of the blood.

The well-known story of the paschal lamb tells out also most strikingly, that there is safety only beneath the shelter of the blood. The sentence of judgment had gone forth upon Egypt. All the first-born were to be destroyed in one night. Neither rich nor poor, moral nor immoral, were excepted. God's word had gone forth,

All the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die {Ex. 11:5}.

But was there no way of escape for any from such terrible judgments? Yes, there was a way, one way, one way only -- the blood of the lamb. The children of Israel were told to take an unblemished lamb, kill it, and sprinkle the blood upon the lintel and doorposts of their houses; and God's promise to such as thus used the blood was,

When I see the blood, I will pass over you {Ex. 12:13}!

And it came to pass that every house marked with the blood was passed over by the destroying angel, and every house that was not marked with blood He entered, and executed the threatened judgment; so that

there was not a house where there was not one dead
{Ex. 12:30}.

The difference consisted simply in the shelter of the blood. Not in their seeing the blood, but in God's seeing it.

When I see the blood, I will pass over you.

Their safety was not in what they thought of the value of the blood, but in what God thought of it. The only question was, as to whether they, in the knowledge that judgment was coming, were under the shelter of the blood. It was not a question as to their being in a great house or small, or whether they were ignorant or learned, young or old, high or low; the only question as to safety was, whether they were trusting in the blood. Those who accepted

God's remedy in the blood, sprinkled their lintel and door-posts, and remained in their houses, under cover of that blood, until the destroying angel had passed over. Safety alone was in the blood. Thus showing us again that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul
{Lev. 17:11}.

The ordinance of cleansing the leper also remarkably sets forth the value of the blood. The leprosy might be much or little, many spots or few, old standing or recent, still the leper was unclean -- utterly unclean -- unfit for the camp of Israel, until he was sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice. All other washings were in vain -- every other remedy was useless. He might go here or there, do this or that, cover up his spots, and hide his sores, still he was utterly unclean. But the moment he was sprinkled with the blood he was pronounced clean. It was the blood that made the difference. It was the blood that cleansed the unclean. We are told,

Then shall the priest sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from his leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean (see Lev. 14:7).

How blessed this is! How clearly it illustrates that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

Let me only add on this point, that directly the leper was pronounced clean, the living bird, having been identified with the dead bird by being dipped in its blood, was

let loose into the open field (see Lev. 14:7);

so the resurrection of Christ from the dead is God's public proof that Christ had by Himself purged our sins with His own blood.

We find the Holy Ghost again putting honor upon the blood, and showing its vital importance in the beautiful action of the high priest entering into the holy place (Lev. 16). The apostle Paul, commenting on this, tells us in Heb. 9, that into the holiest of all

went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood {Heb. 9:7}.

And why not without blood? Because nothing else shelters sinful man from the wrath of God but the blood; for nothing else remits sin. It would have been death to Aaron to enter into the holiest of all without blood. Moses was thus commanded:

Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times . . . within the vail before the mercy seat, . . . that he die not; for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat. Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place, with a bullock for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering . . . and he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and shall sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times {Lev. 16:2, 3, 14}.

Thus we see another witness to the value of the blood, as being the way of access into God's presence, and showing us again that it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.

And I ask the reader to mark these various testimonies of Scripture to the efficacy of the blood, and to consider whether the evidence is not conclusive, that those only are on the true ground of peace and blessing whose confidence is in the blood -- the precious blood of Christ. Nothing less than the blood could shelter

Israel, cleanse the leper, or enable the high priest to stand in God's presence; neither can anything but the blood of Christ cleanse the conscience, give peace in God's presence, or shelter any from the wrath to come.

By the light of New Testament Scriptures, under the Spirit's teaching, we are able to see that all the various sacrifices for sin, &c., under the law, pointed to the one offering of Christ; consequently, since the death of Christ, the sacrifices of bulls and of goats have ceased to be offered. They served a good purpose in shadowing forth the one all-efficacious sacrifice that was coming, and in showing the power of His blood, not only to give us eternal safety, but to answer every question of conscience, as well as every requirement of God's holiness. Therefore the apostle Paul tells us, that in those many sacrifices under the law there was remembrance of sins, but no remission; they could not purge the conscience, because they could not take away sin; but that Christ, by His one offering, which He once offered, put away sin; therefore the blood of Christ purges the conscience to serve the living God. The apostle Peter also says,

Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot {1 Pet. 1:18, 19}.

Hence, when we read that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul
{Lev. 17:11},

we are to understand that reference is made to the blood of Jesus.

It is blessed to notice, in the words immediately preceding the text we are considering, the grace of God as the provider of this atoning blood.

The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement (reconciliation) for your souls {Lev. 17:11}.

This at once opens up to us the blessed truth, that God Himself is the source of our redemption; that He gave His Son -- sent forth His Son -- sent His Son to be the Savior of the world; so that our faith and hope might be in God, and that we might find access with confidence in His presence. And surely it is in the cross that God sets forth the atoning blood. There He shows that He loves us. There it was, by the death of His Son, that God reconciled us unto Himself. Surely it is the blood, the blood of Christ, that makes atonement for our souls. And in comparing our text with New Testament Scriptures, we shall see that we have remission of sins by the blood, justification by the blood, peace by the blood, nearness to God in Christ and by His blood, that we worship on the ground of the blood, and shall enter into glory because of the value of blood. May the Lord help us to consider each of these points a little!

1. REMISSION OF SINS BY THE BLOOD. The Divine testimony, that without shedding of blood is no remission {Heb. 9:22},

is enough to show the utter impossibility of obtaining forgiveness of sins but through the blood. God cleanses us on the ground of sin having been judged and put away. This Christ has done. He declares that His blood was shed for many for the remission of sins. Had He stopped a hair's-breadth short of death, we could not

have had forgiveness. But He bare our sins in His own body on the tree; thus justice was satisfied, and sins were purged. Hence all those who are trusting in the blood of Christ are forgiven. In Him we have redemption through His blood -- the forgiveness of sins. The blood, then, is that which gives remission of sins. All the priests and cardinals in the world may pronounce pardon, but

without shedding of blood is no remission.

Some persons say, "I think my sins are forgiven, because I feel so different"; or, "I think they will be forgiven, if I live differently"; but it is all wrong; such people are deceived, because they are not trusting in the blood; for

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul
{Lev. 17:11}.

"Joyful truth! He bore transgression
In His body on the cross!
Through His blood there's full remission
For the vilest, e'en for us.
Jesus for the sinner bleeds;
Nothing more the sinner needs."

2. JUSTIFICATION BY THE BLOOD. Men may try to justify themselves before their fellow-men, and sometimes succeed in doing so; but we cannot justify ourselves before God. He knows that we are all guilty and unrighteous, and we cannot truthfully take any other ground. But the Scriptures teach us that those only who believe in the Lord Jesus *are justified*, and that they are *justified from all things* by Him. In the blood, God declares that He is just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. God justifies us through the blood; for the blood of Jesus not only tells us of sin put away, but also of One who was perfectly obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; so that, by the obedience of One, many are made righteous. Therefore we are also told, that

being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him {Rom. 5:9}.

We have, then, present justification, not by our own devotedness, or good intentions, but by the blood; so that all who believe in Christ are justified, now justified, by the blood of Jesus. How clear it is, then, that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul!

3. PEACE BY THE BLOOD. Every one who has peace with God knows that it is only through the precious blood of Christ. Nothing quenches the burning of a guilty conscience but the blood. It was nothing less than the death of Christ that satisfied God's justice; therefore that only pacifies the conscience. This is why the Holy Ghost so often uses those texts which refer to the blood of Christ to give peace to anxious souls. It is an already accomplished peace. *He hath made peace* by the blood of His cross, and God is now preaching peace by Jesus Christ; not peace by ordinances, duties, and the like, but peace by Jesus Christ; and all who simply look to Christ, and know that they are justified by His blood, have peace with God; not shall have, but

have peace with God {Rom. 5:1}.

How is it that many anxious souls have not peace? Because they do not believe what God says about the value of the sacrifice of Christ. They look to themselves, to see if their experience is good

enough, bad enough, or religious enough; so that, as frames and feelings change, they alter their judgment of safety. The end of looking to experience for peace must be disappointing; but when, driven out of self and its wretchedness, they look simply to the Lord Jesus, who shed His blood to save sinners, they find peace.

Others are greatly distressed with the fear of death. They do not see that Christ has died in their stead, that He was brought into the dust of death, and tasted death, with all its terrors and judgments, for them; and forget that Jesus said,

If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death
{John 8:51}.

It is true, we may fall asleep in Jesus, but it is a stingless death; and death is so far behind us, and we have been so judicially delivered from it by our Substitute on the cross, that we shall not all sleep; for when Christ descends from heaven, redemption-work will be applied to the bodies of those who are alive, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, we shall be eternally in the presence and likeness of Jesus.

The full peace of others is hindered by the thought of coming judgment. They think that Christ must have us before Him as the Judge, before we can be sure of being saved. This is not true. Christ has been judged for us; our sins have been already condemned in Him, removed from us, borne, suffered for, and put away by Him on the cross: so that, instead of our sins being judged again, God declares,

Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more
{Heb. 10:17};

that they are cast behind His back, &c. Therefore it is clear that Christ hath borne death and judgment for us according as it is written,

AS it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: SO Christ was once offered {Heb. 9:27, 28}.

Thus we see that, death and judgment having been settled for us by Christ, we are called to rejoice in hope of glory; not to be looking for Christ as the Judge, but as our Bridegroom. Not to be expecting to be tried at a general assize, but to be looking for God's Son from heaven, when we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air. Saved ones giving an account of their stewardship at the tribunal of Christ is another thing; but that will not take place until we have glorified bodies, and are like Christ, and with Him for ever.

Again, there are some who have not peace, because they look to the work of the Spirit in them for peace, instead of the work of Christ for them. They see clearly and rightly that it is only by the regenerating power of the Holy Ghost that any one can enter into the kingdom of God, and they look into themselves for the movings and actings of the Spirit for peace instead of the blood. They do not know that the Spirit's office is not to testify of Himself, but of Christ; that He shows us the beauty and glory of Christ, and the blessedness and suitability of His finished work. The Holy Ghost does not say that He has made peace, but that Christ has made peace. He points us to Christ and His blood for forgiveness, peace, righteousness, justification, and redemption. The Spirit comforts us by ministering Christ and His truth to our souls. Therefore we know we are born again, and have the Spirit,

because we find peace with God through Christ's blood. The Spirit writes God's law (or truth) in our minds and in our hearts; so that we not only remember it, but feel it, and have our affections kindled by it, because He testifies to us of God's love. Christ is our peace, not the Spirit, because

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul
{Lev. 17:11}.

But I must pass on, and can only briefly notice the three remaining points.

4. WE HAVE NEARNESS TO GOD BY THE BLOOD. Our sins separated us from God. Naturally we were far from God, but now in Christ, and through His blood, we are made nigh -- brought to the Father's bosom. Thus the believer stands forgiven and blest in God's holy presence; thus he is sanctified by the blood of Christ, reconciled unto God, and stands in happy confidence and grace before Him in love.

5. WE WORSHIP ON THE GROUND OF THE BLOOD. We enter into the holiest

by the blood of Jesus {Heb. 10:19},

and worship the Father. In ourselves there is no ground of praise and thanksgiving, but everything to make us abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes; but the blood so fully witnesses to us of the Father's love, and of our eternal redemption and peace, that we praise and magnify the unsearchable riches of Divine grace. Our consciences are purged, our hearts gladdened, our minds in peace, our souls lifted up; so that we are ready to say,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who
hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places
in Christ {Eph. 1:3}.

"The Savior's precious blood
Has made our title sure;
He pass'd through death's dark raging flood
To make our rest secure."

6. WE SHALL ENTER GLORY BECAUSE OF THE BLOOD. We are purchased by the blood of Jesus. Our hope of glory is Christ, not self. Had not the corn of wheat fallen into the ground and died, it would have been alone; but having died, it brings forth much fruit. All believers are the fruit of Christ's death, are washed in His blood, and will be around the throne of God in heaven, as brought there solely on the ground of the blood of the Lamb. Then we shall sing more sweetly (but not more truly than we can now),

Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His
own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and
His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.
Amen {Rev. 1:5, 6}.

Then it will be fully known that

it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul
{Lev. 17:11}.

Christ the Door

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (John 10:9).

The occasion on which our blessed Lord brought out this wonderful truth was that of opening the eyes of one who had been born blind, as recorded in the preceding chapter, where we find he was cast out of the synagogue because of his confession of Christ. This was a great offence, and still nothing is more offensive to proud man than a true and hearty confession of the Lord Jesus. The apostle's word is not less true now than it was then, that

all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution
{2 Tim. 3:12}.

The Lord had met the man who had been cast out, and blessedly revealed Himself to him. Then the Lord turned the conversation to that of spiritual blindness, so that some of the Pharisees, deeply roused by what they had heard, asked Him,

Are we blind also? {John 9:40}

For Jesus had said,

For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind
{John 9:39}.

A very important testimony; for if a man takes the place of being blind, God is able to make him see; but if he says, I see, and have always been able to discern the things of God, he will have to learn, sooner or later, that he *is* and always *has been* blind.

The *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

This searching testimony of our Lord, as I have observed, so sorely touched the Pharisees, that they said,

Are we blind also?

They felt, doubtless, that they had all the learning of the day, and were the most intelligent people as to Scripture knowledge. Is it possible, then, that such as they could be blind? What was our Lord's reply?

Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth
{John 9:41}.

That is, if they had really known their dark condition, and taken the place of being spiritually blind before God, they would have known God's grace and power to forgive their sins; but saying

We see

implied self complacency, and the absence of felt need; and it is the sick who need the physician. There must be a sense of blindness for any to desire their eyes to be opened; a sense of guilt to lead any one to desire forgiveness.

Except a man be born again, he cannot *see* the kingdom of God {John 3:3}.

The Lord is still speaking to the Pharisees in the tenth chapter. They not only professed to see, but to guide and shepherd God's sheep. The question is, How came they thus in the place of

shepherds? Had they a Divine or human qualification? Had they gone in by the door? for if they had climbed up some other way, they were only thieves and robbers. A very solemn, searching announcement. The true Shepherd enters by the door; the porter opens to Him; the sheep hear His voice; they are His own sheep, and He *leadeth them out*. Yes, He leads them out from former ways and associations; outside everything that dishonors God -- outside the path of sight, because into the path of faith and love.

The blessed Lord, the true and good Shepherd, declares that He is *the door*, the only way of access to God, the *ONLY* door, for any who desire salvation. He said,

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved
{John 10:9}.

Thus we see that Jesus not only sought to convict these Pharisees of their blindness and falseness, but throws wide open the door to any who had a desire to enter in. There was not a soul who heard Christ's ministry that could go away and say, "There is no salvation for me"; for Jesus said,

By me if any man
-- no matter who he is --
if *any man* enter in, he shall be saved.

How simple this is! A door is not a long, dreary passage. A person only takes a single step to enter a door. My unconverted readers, you are outside the door. It is simply entering into God's presence through Jesus Christ His Son, who was crucified for sinners, but is now at God's right hand, and you are saved, and saved for ever. It is

by ME,

said Jesus, not by feelings, nor by experiences, nor by good resolutions, nor even by good works, but by Christ.

By ME if any man enter in, he shall be saved.

Oh the blessedness of having the Lord's authority for the assertion, that those of us who have entered into God's presence by Christ are saved! Can anything be more simple? I remember hearing of a poor sick woman, who was told by some ladies who visited her, that Jesus was the door into God's presence, and that there was no other way, and that all who entered in by Him were saved. She replied, "May I enter in in that way?" She was told, "Yes." "Then why not now?" said she; and, turning on her side, she simply looked up toward heaven, and taking God at His word, entered in by Jesus, and was filled with joy and peace.

Mark again, I say, the simplicity and the preciousness of the words,

By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved {John 10:9}.

It is no use saying you are too great a sinner, too old, too young, or anything else; it is,

if *any man*.

God is no respecter of persons. All have sinned. Every man is guilty before God. He that believeth not is condemned already. *Now* it is true that, if *any man* enter in by Christ, he will be saved; but *in a little while* it will be said,

If *any man* love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed when the Lord cometh {see 1 Cor. 16:22, Anathema Maranatha = Accursed -- the Lord cometh, JND note}.

Now,

WHOSOEVER believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life {John 3:16};

but *by and by*, WHOSOEVER is not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire.

Have you known, dear reader, what it is to receive this great salvation? Have you entered in by the door? Do you know what it is to find yourself in God's presence, through the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ? A believer is one who has accepted Christ for his Savior, who has entered in through the door. A person may *know* that Christ is the door, and yet have never entered in. This is the difference between *knowledge* and *faith*. Faith takes Christ simply at His word, and enters in.

By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved {John 10:9}.

This is the testimony of Jesus. Is there any room for doubt or fear, when you know that you have entered in by Christ? Surely He delights to save. He casts out none that come to Him. Resting on His word, we have perfect peace; we find ourselves at rest in God's presence.

The posture that Jesus now takes toward a guilty world is that of *Savior*, but in a little while it will be that of *Judge*. How, then, can any escape who neglect this great salvation? He will judge both the living and the dead; but now He is calling, in richest love and mercy, to sinners to enter in and be saved. His arms are still thrown wide open. His almighty power is still snatching brands from the burning. He yet calls in tenderest love,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

All He asks of you is to

Come.

He wants nothing more of you than to submit to be wholly saved by Him; to

enter in

on the ground of an already accomplished redemption; to

refuse not Him that speaketh {Heb. 12:25},

but to rest in His finished work. Can you, will you, any longer, then, be taken up with the unsatisfying pleasures of sin; and by your own hand of unbelief close this only door of escape from the wrath to come?

Thank God, the door is still wide open, and Christ saves to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him; but soon the door will be shut. Many will knock then, but the door is closed upon them for ever. Many will be in earnest about their eternal welfare then, but it will be too late. In their anxiety for a mess of pottage, they counted eternal blessings unworthy of their interest;

but now they feel themselves close on the precipice of outer darkness and despair, their distress is awakened, and never to be relieved; they knock, and call, and shriek,

Lord, Lord, open unto us.

But the reply from within,

I know you not {Luke 13:25},

will for ever plunge them into the despondency of an eternal gloom. Oh, once more, think of those sweet words of Jesus,

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved {John 10:9}!

Strive

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out (Luke 13:23-28).

Some persons seem constantly occupied with religious questions. Their enquiry is not, "Am I saved?" but, "Are others saved?" Sometimes we find a fond parent solicitous about the future state of a dying child, a kind master anxious about his afflicted servant's spiritual condition, and others manifesting concern for the ignorant and poor around them, without laying to heart what their own state before God really is. It was so in the days of our Lord.

One said unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved?
{Luke 13:23}

to which Jesus replied,

Strive to enter in at the strait gate {Luke 13:24}.

Thus He sought to lead him away from the consideration of others, to ponder the all-important question of his own soul's salvation; and exposed the folly of appearing concerned for others, while he himself was in the broad road to destruction. So weighty, so essential, is the point, and so fatal would a mistake be, that He commands them to

strive (or agonize) to enter in at the strait gate.

We do well to observe, that the instruction here is not that they were to do a great many things, or even one thing, to make themselves fit for God; or that they were to wander through a long, tedious labyrinth to find blessing and safety. No; it is simply a

gate

that is presented to them as the alone way of escape; and their security and blessing depended on their entering in at the gate. The condition of all outside is most perilous; but there is a way of escape; and judgment and condemnation must overtake those who do not accept the only way of deliverance by entering in at the strait gate.

1. WHAT IS THE STRAIT GATE? There could have been no way of escape for sinners from the wrath to come, had not Jesus died upon the cross.

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit {John 12:24}.

It is the cross of Christ that speaks to us of sin put away, redemption accomplished, and of the sinner's only way to God. Christ crucified, then, is the

strait gate.

Jesus lifted up on the cross is the door of access.

I am the door,

said He:

by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved {John 10:9}.

The cross of Christ, therefore, becomes the point of separation between the saved and lost. Not to enter into God's presence through this gate is still to tarry in the place of death and judgment; but to enter into the Father's presence through the atoning work of His dear Son is present peace and eternal salvation. The gospel thus presents to us a door of escape, and it is still wide open; it welcomes all guilty sinners that

enter in

by faith, thus sheltering them for ever from the wrath of God, and shutting them into the peace-speaking presence of the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort.

2. IT IS A STRAIT GATE. True Christianity is an individual thing. The gate is so strait, so narrow, that all who enter go in one by one. Many long to take others with them, but each person is accountable to God for himself; every one must be exercised before God on account of his own sin. The gospel appeals to the individual conscience.

He that believeth on the Son {John 3:36},

He that hath the Son {1 John 5:12},

He that believeth and is baptized, &c. {Mark 16:16}.

Paul said,

I know whom I have believed {2 Tim. 1:12},

I obtained mercy {1 Tim. 1:13, 16},

Christ

loved *me* {Gal. 2:20}.

This is very weighty, and shows us the deep necessity of each one asking the all-important question, "Am *I* saved?" We may be members of religious bodies, and outwardly appear consistent; but those only who have entered in at the strait gate are saved.

3. ENTER IN. There is no promise of safety to any who do not enter in {Luke 13:24}

at the strait gate. We are not to think about the gate merely, but to enter in.

It is one thing to know there is a Savior, and another to find salvation through His blood. It is to be feared that many who say they know the way of salvation have not availed themselves of it. We enter in at the strait gate by faith. In the death and resurrection of Christ, we see that the God of grace has opened a

door of salvation for sinners, and by faith in the efficacy of that redemption-work we enter into God's presence, and know Him as a sin-pardoning God. It is not my knowing the fact that Christ is a Savior that saves me, but believing on Him for the salvation of my soul; and thus I enter into the presence of the God of peace by Him. In Israel's time, it was the manslayer who had entered into the city of refuge that was safe. In the days of Noah, those only who actually entered into the ark were saved. Many might be just outside, trying to lay hold on the boards, with the water gurgling in their throats; but they were as unsaved as those who were the farthest from it. And so in the case of the crowd that surrounded our Lord: it was only the one who came and touched the hem of His garment that was made whole. There must, then, be the receiving of Christ, trusting in Him, believing in Him, taking refuge in Him, resting on His finished work, entering in by Him for life and salvation.

4. STRIVE TO ENTER IN. This solemn subject calls for earnestness. The eternal importance of the work of Christ demands it. God cannot bear indifference. Embracing views merely is a poor thing. Learning a few religious ways and phrases will not do for God. All the world are guilty before Him. Judgment is quickly coming. The wrath of God is soon coming, and fall it must upon all Christless souls. His almighty arm and perfect love have made a door of escape, and His gracious voice exclaims to sinners,

Strive, or agonize, to enter in at the strait gate!

Do not be content at having serious impressions, or good desires. Rest not till you have entered in at the strait gate. Be in real earnest. Let not formal duties suffice; let not a little concern satisfy you; let not the credit of being religious among men be enough for you. Oh, no! Have real concern, for eternity is at hand. Your life is short; many will miss the strait gate; many will be deceived; many will find out their mistake when it is too late. Strive, then, agonize to enter in at the strait gate; escape for thy life, flee from the pit, turn to the Savior; on no account miss His great salvation.

5. THERE ARE MANY HINDRANCES TO PERSONS ENTERING IN AT THE STRAIT GATE.

(1). *The carnal mind.* We all naturally like to live and act as if there were no God, and as if we were not needing salvation. We all strive to be happy apart from God and the Savior. We are of the world which lieth in the wicked one. We constantly stray farther from God, doing, as far as possible, our own will, and having our own way. The mind is carnally opposed to God, and not subject to Him; it seeks rest any where rather than in God.

All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way {Isa. 53:6}.

The heart, therefore, is naturally opposed to striving to enter in at the strait gate.

(2). *Satan* is a great hinderer -- he specially tries to keep persons from taking refuge in Christ for salvation. He blinds the eye, lest the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. Formerly he tried to suppress the mention of the name of Jesus altogether. Now he can no longer effect this; but he

diligently seeks to hinder the testimony to the value of His death. He has not so much objection to people thinking of the strait gate; but he still opposes with all his might their entering in. He knows that persons may be acquainted with the history of Christ's ways and miracles, and still be unsaved; but it is coming, through Christ crucified, to God for salvation, -- to the risen and ascended Savior for righteousness and glory, that he so opposes.

(3). *The world* also says, Do not enter in at the strait gate. It promises its gains and emoluments, its favours and advancements, its luxuries and gratifications; it presents a glare of tinsel to try to satisfy the human heart, and blind the eye. Its changing fashions, moving scenes, and untiring promises of improvement, occupy the mind; and so it seeks to lull the awakened conscience to find repose in its adulterous bosom. All these elements tend to keep the soul from entering in at the strait gate, and to linger still in the place of condemnation and judgment, where the Lord is coming to put all enemies under His feet.

(4). *Relations and acquaintances* are sometimes mighty enemies in trying to keep souls, if possible, from entering in at the strait gate. Loss of worldly position or business, the expected scorning of friends, and many other such things, are presented as powerful reasons for disobeying Him who said,

Strive to enter in at the strait gate;

while the certain knowledge of present salvation is talked of as presumption, and present forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ put down for enthusiasm. Thus there are terrible obstacles, both within and around, to persons coming to Christ crucified and risen for salvation.

(5). THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE WHO "STRIVE." They agonize, or strive to enter in at the strait gate, because they know they are sinners, justly deserving God's eternal condemnation; they are assured that there is no other way of escape, and that

"No works or duties of their own
Can for the smallest sin atone."

They are conscious there is a principle of pride in them naturally, to induce them to put confidence in themselves instead of the atoning work of Christ; therefore, under the guidance and power of the Spirit of God, they inwardly strive against such thoughts. They feel that their proud, carnal minds try to hinder, but they

strive.

They hear the alluring cries of the great deceiver, but they

strive.

They behold the world's glare, but they

strive

to enter in at the strait gate. They agonize to rest simply on the finished work of Christ, and know there is no other entrance for the sinner into God's happy presence but through the finished work of Jesus. They are not satisfied at merely reading the Scriptures, or knowing a little about Christ, or at being considered religious by others, or at statedly hearing gospel truths proclaimed. No. They feel that they need salvation, and nothing less than

salvation can satisfy them, nothing short of peace with God, against whom they are conscious of having so sinned, will do for them. They know the gate is still open, and they do not know how soon it may be shut. They are conscious that they must perish for ever, if they do not enter in. They perceive that God has opened the gate; that the Savior says,

Enter in {Luke 13:24};

that the Scriptures declare it is the only way; that God's servants urgently proclaim its eternal importance, and thousands around declare they have experienced the blessedness of it; therefore they

enter in at the strait gate.

They come as guilty, worthless, naked sinners, and they find in Calvary's cross that God Himself is the source of pardon, peace, righteousness, and glory, for all that come unto Him through Christ.

Knowing that Christless souls must enter into the pit of eternal destruction, they could not rest till they fled for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel, and knew that they were saved. By faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, they experience that they have exchanged a guilty for a purged conscience -- have been rescued from an evil world for the presence of the God of grace and peace; they feel themselves new creatures; they know that they have passed from death unto life, and they rejoice in pardoning love.

"Pardon from an offended God,
Pardon for crimes of deepest dye,
Pardon bestowed through Jesu's blood,
Pardon that brings the rebel nigh;
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or where the grace so rich and free?"

But our Lord gave four reasons why they should strive to enter in at the strait gate.

1. Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.
2. The door will be shut.
3. Many professors will be shut out.
4. The eternal torment of the lost.

1. Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able. The time will come when it will be too late. Some will knock, and get no admittance. Now the Savior's language is,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28};

and,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

But the time is coming when God must deal with men righteously, instead of in grace, as He now does; for God

hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness {Acts 17:31}.

Now, God is preaching to guilty sinners

peace by Jesus Christ {Acts 10:36},

then He will judge men according to their works. Now, many will not enter in at the strait gate; then, many will knock, saying,

Lord, Lord, open unto us {Luke 13:25}!

Now, sinners hide in the Savior's arms, and are saved; then, sinners will seek salvation, and will not find it. Now, they will not come to God to cover their sins with the Redeemer's blood; but by and by they will cry to the rocks and mountains, saying,

Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb {Rev. 6:16}.

Those who do not know the Savior now will find that He will ere long say,

I know you not {Luke 13:25}.

How important, then, that persons should at once enter in at the strait gate!

2. The door will be shut.

When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door {Luke 13:25}.

The gospel is not always going to be preached. God will not always send forth the message of peace. He is the God of judgment as well as the God of peace, and Christ is a Judge as well as a Savior. He is now seated on the right hand of God, but He will ere long rise up and shut to the door. The preaching of the cross will then cease; the seeker will not find, the knocker will be disappointed, the asker will be refused; the gospel testimony will close, the church be removed to glory, and the hypocrite and unbeliever left for judgment. Men will discover their mistake then. The folly of putting off salvation will be made manifest. The door will be shut, and man's doom eternally settled.

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still {Rev. 22:11}.

How imperative, then, is the necessity to

strive to enter in at the strait gate.

3. Many professors will be shut out. In the parable of the ten virgins we are told that, after the door is shut, many will come knocking, saying,

Lord, Lord, open to us {Matt. 25:11};

and here, also, our Lord says,

Many

will say,

We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets; but He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity {Luke 13:26, 27}.

On another occasion our Lord speaks of these persons as saying in that day,

Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you {Matt. 7:22, 23}!

These things clearly show us that many who have professed to be servants of Christ, and who may have accomplished great things in His name, never knew the value of His sin-atoning work for their own souls, never entered into the strait gate for their own

salvation. How very awful this is! They may have striven to accomplish

wonderful works

in His name, but never knew what it was to

strive to enter in at the strait gate.

What a solemn warning this presents to any who have not yet trusted in the atoning work of Christ for the salvation of their souls!

4. *The eternal torment of the lost.*

He *that* believeth not shall be damned {Mark 16:16},

and

He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him {John 3:36},

are words of the God of truth which must have their fulfilment. Not to

enter in at the strait gate

for salvation, is not to believe in that Savior whom God hath sent, but to be a

worker of iniquity {see Luke 13:27},

living in rebellion against the God of love and peace.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth {Luke 13:28}.

They will have the consciousness that others are saved, but themselves for ever lost; they will know that others are for ever happy through the redemption-work of Christ, and they themselves cast into the lake of fire, into everlasting punishment; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. How powerful were the Savior's appeals! How simple, yet how thrilling, were the reasons He assigned why persons should

strive to enter in at the strait gate!

Many will hear these things, and yet not seek the way of escape. Some will not submit to the righteousness of God, but go about to establish their own righteousness; their thoughts rise not higher than their own fancied goodness. Others openly reject the joyful sound of salvation through the death of Christ; they scorn the truth of the Lord's return from heaven, and scoffingly exclaim --

Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation {2 Pet. 3:4}.

Others hear the truth, will distinguish between the doctrines of grace and many of the religious dogmas of the day, and show some respect for ordinances and outward sanctity; but their hearts have never yielded to be saved wholly by the finished work of Christ. Their inward thought is,

We will not have this man to reign over us {Luke 19:14};

while the Scripture too plainly draws the awful picture of others professing to go out with lamps to meet the bridegroom while being destitute of oil in their lamps; or of attempting to be guests of the marriage supper without having on a wedding garment. In short, while the Scripture plainly shows us that salvation is only to those who

enter in at the strait gate,

we find many warnings presented therein of man risking his soul's eternal welfare on almost every conceivable pretence; thus, while God says there is no other way, and no other name, whereby man can be saved, but the name of Jesus, man in self-confidence assumes that there are other names and other ways.

Happy those who do not presume to argue and contend with the Almighty, but feel that God is greater than man, and the only fountain of light, and love, and truth. The first sign often manifest of spiritual life is the willingness to lay aside human thoughts, and be ready to submit to God's thoughts; for naturally our thoughts are not as His thoughts, neither are our ways His ways. It is well when a soul is made willing to receive God's truth. Such turn to the Scriptures to know the mind and will of God. From the Bible they learn, under the Spirit's teaching, that fallen man is a corrupt tree that cannot bring forth good fruit; that without union with Christ risen and glorified, there can be no fruit brought forth to God. They are instructed also by the Spirit, through the word of the Lord, that the world is under sentence of condemnation, and that the only way of salvation from the wrath to come is by faith in the Son of God. Thus the awakened soul, that begins to submit to God's thoughts, is led to submit also to God's righteousness and redemption in Christ, and to rejoice in being justified by faith, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, my reader! hast thou entered in at the strait gate? Have the iron sinews of thy knees yet bowed in adoring gratitude to the Savior of sinners? Has thy hard, stony heart been broken by the truth of God, and melted by the Savior's love? Have the tears and groans, the agony and bloody sweat, the suffering and death of the Son of God, been matters of the deepest concern to thee? If not before, may the language of thy soul now be, --

"Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Vile I to the fountain fly,
Wash me, Savior, or I die."

Make Haste

Make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house (Luke 19:5).

The speaker here is the Lord Jesus. The person addressed is a sinner among the publicans. The subject is of vital importance. The words are few, but earnest and decided. The Lord knew the value of one soul, and the profitless character of everything else in comparison with it. He could fully enter into the frailty of human life, the countless ages of eternity, the ceaseless torments of the lost, and the everlasting joy and glory of the saved. He felt the eternal importance of the soul's salvation; hence His ministry was most urgent. At one time He would say,

Fear Him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell {Matt. 10:28};

on another occasion,

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish {Luke 13:3, 5};

and here it was,

Make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house {Luke 19:5}.

Zacchæus was a tax-gatherer, or publican, a chief man among them too, and seemed to have made money by his profession, for he was rich. Publicans were not considered honest persons, and therefore were not much respected; and Zacchæus's allusion to taking things by false accusation seems to imply that he had not been blameless in this respect. He had, however, heard of Jesus, His mighty miracles, and wonderful works and words, and had a great desire to see Him. But the crowd around the Lord was great, which operated as a hindrance to his seeing Jesus, unless he ran before, outstripped the multitude, and got upon some elevated place. Though a rich man, his purpose was so decided, that he would not allow anything to hinder his seeing Jesus; he therefore ran before, and climbed up a sycamore tree, in the direction he knew that the Lord would pass. There might have been more than mere curiosity working in his heart; for he neither allowed the press of the crowd, nor anything else, to hinder his desire being gratified; we see, also, that he was enabled to obey the Lord immediately that he was

called {see Luke 19:5}.

But, be that as it may, it is clear that Jesus was the great object of attraction to him --

he sought to see Jesus {Luke 19:3}.

Nothing less than Christ Himself would satisfy him; so he went where he knew that the Lord would pass. But he little thought, while he was occupied in seeking the Lord, that the Lord was seeking him. Many a seeker says, "I am trying to find the Savior"; but the truth is, that He who came to seek and save the lost is seeking them. They would not have desires after Christ, longings for an interest in His salvation, and heartfelt cries after Him, if He had not commenced a work of grace in their souls. When the women were seeking the Lord after His resurrection, the bright angel said to them,

Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified {Matt. 28:5}.

Oh! my reader, if Christ Jesus who was crucified for sinners is the One you are really seeking, be encouraged, and fear not!

In meditating on the Scripture before us, we may notice,

1. The gracious posture of the Son of God.
2. His urgent appeal.
3. The blessedness of receiving Jesus, and its results.

1. THE POSTURE OF THE SON OF GOD. We are told that

When Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house {Luke 19:5}.

What amazing condescension, for the Lord of glory thus to look up and speak to sinful man! What love! But such is the character of the heart of Jesus. Though bright angelic hosts surround the throne of heaven, we are told that

His delights were with the sons of men {see Prov. 8:31}.

Yes, man, who was created in the image of God, always had a place in His heart; and when fallen into degradation and ruin, through sin and rebellion against his Creator, Jesus still loved man; and his fallen, undone state only served the more to make manifest the vast resources of Divine love and mercy. The Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father, left the bright glory and happiness of the throne of heaven, condescended to be made of a woman, and came forth

in the likeness of sinful flesh {Rom. 8:3},

that as Man, by the death of the cross, He might redeem man from all iniquity, and bring many sons to glory. This is Divine love. Though He was God manifest in the flesh, He emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant. He did all Jehovah's righteous will, obeyed every jot and tittle of the law, and humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross, that by such depths of humiliation, pain, and death under the judgment of God as Sin-bearer, He might glorify the Father, and redeem us from the utter destruction and eternal despair to which, as sinners, we were justly exposed. It was the same loving-hearted Jesus, who afterward died on the cross, that came where Zacchæus was, and said,

make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house {Luke 19:5}.

It was the same Jesus who said to sinful Israel by His prophet in days of old,

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool {Isa. 1:18}.

It was the same blessed Savior who said to His apostles after His resurrection,

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned {Mark 16:15, 16}.

It was the same Jesus who said,

If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink
{John 7:37};

and who still says,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely
{Rev. 22:17}.

Such is the love of Christ, and such is the gracious posture He still takes towards sinful man. He delighteth in mercy. He waiteth to be gracious. He saves to the uttermost. He welcomes every sinner that comes to Him for salvation. He calls loudly by His gospel, His servants, and His providence --

Make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house {Luke 19:5}.

Still, with long-suffering kindness, He proclaims salvation for the lost, saying,

I will have mercy, and not sacrifice {Matt. 19:13; 12:7}.

In wondrous grace He died for man's redemption, and in the same boundless love He says,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

"Love, only love, Thy heart inclined,
And brought Thee, Savior of mankind,
Down from Thy throne above;
Love made Thee here a man of grief,
To bleed and die for my relief;
O mystery of love!"

2. LET US NOW CONSIDER THE LORD'S URGENT APPEAL.

Make haste, and come down {Luke 19:5}.

We are all naturally lifted up with self-esteem. Men live and speak as if they were not fallen creatures; but all true Christians have experienced what it is to

come down

to receive salvation. All must

come down

if they would be saved from the wrath to come; for all have sinned, and the blood of Christ alone gives remission. The gospel is preached that men may

come down

to the Savior; for He calls the high-minded to

come down

and receive forgiveness of sins. Oh that proud men would

come down

and receive Christ!

The Lord killeth, and the Lord maketh alive: . . . He bringeth low, and He lifteth up {1 Sam. 2:6, 7}.

The Holy Ghost convinces of sin before He gives peace to the soul through Christ. The way of God the Father is, to bring the lofty mind of man down to the Savior's feet; for Jesus said,

Every man therefore that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh unto me {John 6:45}.

Some persons are especially Pharisaic in their views. They seem inflated with self-righteous notions. They think themselves better than their neighbours. They boast of a well-spent life, and highly prize their good intentions. They flatter themselves in their own eyes, and when conscience accuses, they at once take refuge in their outward sanctity, creature-merit, religious ordinances, alms-deeds, &c., as a compensation. With self-complacent feelings they look down upon the passing crowd, and resolve to pursue their lofty course with increased zeal. Such, however, must

come down,

if they would know God's salvation. Self-righteousness must be brought low, creature-merit must be disowned, and high thoughts must be laid aside; they must

come down

as lost, undone, unclean sinners to the Savior's outstretched arms, if they would know His great salvation; for He came not to call the righteous, but to bring sinners to repentance.

There are also persons who, in pride of heart, cry out, like Pharaoh,

Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice {Ex. 5:2}?

They despise the truth, stifle conviction of conscience, persecute God's people, harden themselves against the gospel message, and say in their heart,

We will not have the man Christ Jesus to reign over us {see Luke 19:14}.

I have lately met one of these, to whom I kindly said, "Have you ever felt that you are a sinner in the sight of God?" His reply was, "I never talk on that subject." The wondrous love of God to sinful man, that fills all heaven with praise and glory, was a subject too mean and trifling to be worthy of the contemplation of such a great mind as he thought he possessed. Such, however, must

make haste and comedown {Luke 19:5}

to the Savior of sinners, if they would escape the fiery wrath and eternal indignation that is so quickly coming upon the impenitent and unbelieving.

There is another class of persons very different from these, but who equally need to

come down.

Their curiosity is excited in religious matters, but they have neither a guilty conscience nor a

broken heart {Psa. 34:18},

and are, personally, strangers to the joy of Christ's salvation. They like to hear this man and that -- go here and there -- make what they call religious acquaintances, and take pleasure in understanding every thing that is doing in the so-called religious world. Their minds are more or less exercised about the merits or demerits of various doctrines and outward rites, and the prosperity or failure, the orthodox or erroneous views, of those around them. They know well the difference between Judaism, Mohammedanism, Popery, and Christianity; and, giving preference to the last on this list, they watch with interest some of its outward operations and results. They are acquainted with the letter of Scripture, and bow to the claims of morality and benevolence; but, alas! the conscience has not been exercised

before God; they are strangers to the tears of a contrite heart, and know nothing about the new birth. As some persons manifest curiosity in investigating the different branches of science, and take deep interest in watching the various actions of cause and effect, so these people carry the same spirit of curiosity and intellectual gratification in matters of religion as they call it; and, comparing themselves with some others, take pride in their measure of intelligence, instead of taking the place of

shame and confusion of face {see Ezra 9:7, Psa. 44:15},

on account of their iniquity, transgression, and sin against God. But curiosity is to be dreaded as much as self-righteousness, or proud infidelity; all must

come down,

if such would be partakers of Christ's salvation, and realize peace with God through the blood of the cross.

A sense of absolute necessity compels souls to

come down

to receive the Savior. We take refuge in Him; because He is the only hope. We fly to His outstretched arms, knowing we must perish for ever without Him. With self-abasement we renounce our filthy rags of self-righteousness, and gladly welcome the

best robe {Luke 15:22}.

All, therefore, that have truly found salvation, have experienced what it is to

come down;

to lay aside creature-merit and fancied goodness in every form, and receive salvation as lost and undone, as the free gift of God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But our Lord commanded Zacchæus to

make haste {Luke 19:5}.

How important this is! How many there are who in heart say,

Not yet {see Acts 24:25}!

Like Felix, they sometimes tremble under the word preached, but postpone the further consideration of it to

a more convenient season {Acts 24:25};

yet it is to be feared that with some

a more convenient season

never comes. There are others who, like Agrippa, are almost persuaded to be Christians, but are never altogether so, because they continually put off the personal application of the truth. When my family is grown up and settled, says one; when my business matters are over, says another; when I am free from present occupation, says a third; then I will attend to the state of my soul. Thus they reject Christ and His salvation. The farm, the merchandise, family duties, social obligations, and necessary occupations, are all cleverly pleaded by man's desperately wicked and deceitful heart, as reasons for rejecting Christ and His great salvation. Still, however, the loving Savior cries,

Make haste!

it is, therefore positive disobedience to delay.

Compel them to come in {Luke 14:23}!

He says; it is therefore rebellion to object.

Come unto the marriage {Matt. 22:4}!

He proclaims by His servants; is it not, therefore, despising Him and His message still to linger without? How very solemn this is! How few persons seem to be sensible of the vast responsibility connected with the preaching of the gospel of God! How little men think when they hear, and they do not

make haste and come down,

that they reject the gospel of the grace of God, and thus close the only door of escape from eternal burning, and the only way of admission into glory! Oh that my readers would ponder again our Lord's declaration,

He that believeth not shall be damned {Mark 16:16}!

How important it is that men should

make haste and come down

to the Savior's feet. Who knows of whom it will be next said,

This night thy soul shall be required of thee {Luke 12:20}?

How very soon the divine mandate may go forth,

Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live
{2 Kings 20:1}.

How sad, then, to put off the solemn consideration of the soul's salvation! How perilous to say, "It is time enough yet," when we do not know what a day may bring forth! To-day is the day of salvation; but we do not know what to-morrow will be.

Choose you *this day*,

said Joshua,

whom ye will serve {Josh. 24:15}.

And the Psalmist exclaimed,

To day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts
{Heb. 3:7, 8; 3:15; 4:7}.

To day I must abide at thy house {Luke 19:5},

said our Lord to Zacchæus.

To day shalt thou be with me in paradise {Luke 23:43},

said the Savior to the believing malefactor. Now the gospel is preached. Now the Savior welcomes returning prodigals. Now He commands all men everywhere to repent. Now He says,

Make haste and come down.

But soon He will come forth in glory to put all enemies under His feet. How eternally important it is, then, that persons should now receive the Savior whom God hath sent?

3. THE BLESSEDNESS OF RECEIVING JESUS, AND ITS RESULTS.

We are told that Zacchæus

made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully
{Luke 19:6}.

This is very simple, yet touching. The Savior always means what He says; He is always as good as His word. He told the sinful publican that He *must* abide at his house that day, and He did so; and the reason the Lord gave for being the guest of such a sinful man as this wealthy son of Abraham was, that He came to

seek and to save that which was lost {Luke 19:10}.

Zacchæus then received Jesus -- not peculiar views, or rites, or ordinances, but the Lord Himself. He believed that the Lord of

glory loved him, and had come from heaven to save such a sinful and unworthy creature. This marvelous grace not only comforted him, but humbled him into a spirit of self-judgment and confession, and also constrained him to serve and follow Christ.

No one can receive Jesus without being *happy*. Zacchæus

received Him *joyfully*.

Present as well as eternal blessing is the portion of those who received the Lord Jesus:

As many as received Him, to them gave He power (or privilege) to become the sons of God {John 1:12}.

To know the love of God in Christ His Son to us, as sinful and ungodly, in eternal deliverance from condemnation, and the fulness of its unchanging perfectness, fills the soul with joy and peace.

Salvation is immediately the portion of those who receive the Lord Jesus.

This day is *salvation* come to this house {Luke 19:9}.

Man's thought naturally is, that he must worship and serve God *now*, and risk being eventually saved; but God's way is to give us salvation at once, and to receive our service and worship, because we are saved. Paul taught the Corinthian saints this doctrine. He says,

But ye *are* washed, but ye *are* sanctified, but ye *are* justified . . . Ye *are* not your own; for ye *are* bought with a price: *therefore* glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which *are* God's {1 Cor. 6:11, 19, 20}.

But how wonderful is the blessing of *present salvation*, the knowledge that Christ Himself is *now* our life and righteousness, and that because He lives, we shall live also!

"More happy, but not more secure,
The souls of the blessed in heaven."

The believer is also brought into *fellowship with the Son of God*. Eating together is a mark, not only of friendship, but of love and equality. David showed the kindness of God to Mephibosheth, by commanding that he should eat bread with him at his table continually, as one of the king's sons. Jesus might have *saved* Zacchæus without becoming his guest; but the love of Christ not only saves, but calls us into fellowship with Himself, and brings us into the Father's presence, as sons of God and brethren of Christ; loved by the Father as the Father loved Christ. This is unutterable love; but so it is, and it is our privilege to enjoy it.

But further. Zacchæus was exercised about godly walk, and commending himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. This must always be the result of knowing salvation by Christ. We then feel that we are not only God's creatures, but God's children; and we serve Him not only from duty, but from choice. We fear not, then, Divine wrath, but fear lest we grieve One who so perfectly loves us.

Not my will, but thine, be done {Luke 22:42},

must be, more or less, the utterance of all believers, and this brings exercise of heart and conscience concerning our daily walk and circumstances. Remembering how much we have been forgiven makes it easy to forgive others; and a sense of the Divine kindness and mercy we have received constrains us to take

pleasure in loving and serving others. The knowledge that the world has crucified the holy, loving Son of God, and that it is hastening on to its fearful judgment, makes us feel thankful that we are not of the world, but are rescued out of it, in wondrous grace, by the atoning death of Christ; and the blessed hope, that when Christ shall appear we shall be like Him, directs our souls upward and onward to the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. Thus we see that present happiness, salvation, fellowship, and godly walk, are at once connected with receiving the Lord Jesus.

But what an awful doom awaits those who do not

make haste, and come down

and receive the Savior! Jesus said,

If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins {John 8:24}.

Thus we see that those who do not now

make haste

to come to the Lord Jesus for salvation are making haste on the broad road to destruction; and those who do not now

come down

at the bidding of the Savior's gospel, will be cast down into outer darkness at the command of the Judge of all. Then eternity, eternity, must for ever shut out all hope and mercy; for weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, in darkness and despair, must be the unchanging portion of those who obey not the Savior's call.

Once more, dear reader, let me say,

Make haste,

delay not, hesitate no longer, linger no more, at once decide, and come down

to the loving arms of the Savior, whose blood cleanseth from all sin; and salvation, with all its present and eternal blessings, will be your portion for ever. May the Holy Spirit enable you to do so!

"Thine, alas! a lost condition,
Works cannot work thee remission,
Nor thy goodness do thee good;
Death's within thee, -- all about thee,
But the remedy's without thee --
See it in thy Savior's blood!"

Who Are Christ's Sheep?

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (John 10:27, 28).

There were religious people all around, but were they Christ's sheep? This was the all-important question. There was

the hireling {John 10:13}

too, and

the thief {John 10:10},

the stranger {John 10:5}

and

the wolf {John 10:12};

but oh, how different from the Good Shepherd! We cannot forget that there are still many sheep round about us who are very dear to the heart of Jesus. He calls them

His own sheep {John 10:3}.

They belong to Him. He loved them, and gave Himself for them. He said,

The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep {John 10:11}.

What amazing love!

“When blood from a victim must flow,
This Shepherd by pity was led
To stand between us and the foe,
And willingly died in our stead.”

One characteristic of Christ's sheep is, that *they hear His voice*. No matter who may be the instrument, the question with them is, Is it *Christ's* voice? What is *He* saying? This is one mark of the sheep of Christ from first to last.

They know not the voice of strangers {John 10:5},

but the Shepherd's voice they well know. It is Jesus they love to hear. When Paul went to Thessalonica, they received his testimony because it was God's truth. They were not taken up with the servant, but with the message that he brought. They owned it to be God's testimony. In it they heard the voice of the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep. They did not receive the testimony as Paul's opinions; for it came to them,

not . . . in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance {1 Thess. 1:5};

they therefore

turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come {1 Thess. 1:9}.

When Paul went to the polished citizens of Corinth, he purposely sought to preach in simple language; and though he was a learned man, he laid aside eloquent and enticing words of man's wisdom, lest the people should hear only Paul's voice, and not receive God's testimony, and thus their faith stand in the wisdom of men instead of the power of God. Thus they heard and received God's

truth about the Lord Jesus; they heard the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd through Paul.

The question is, What is the Lord Jesus, who is seated on the right hand of God in the heavens, saying now? If He were now to speak in an audible voice, would it not be,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that *heareth my word*, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life {John 5:24}?

Surely this is His testimony. See, then, that you refuse not His voice who speaketh from heaven. The believer looks up to heaven, beholds the face of Jesus by faith, hearkens to His word, and receives His testimony. Christ's sheep hear His voice. Many know the way of salvation, but have not received Christ as their Savior. They do not hear His voice in the gospel.

Ye believe not,
said Jesus,

because ye are not of my sheep {John 10:26}.

Christ knows His sheep. True it is that He knows all things; but He peculiarly knows His own. The acquaintance is mutual. They know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, and He knows them.

He knoweth them that trust in Him {Nah. 1:7}.

Many a professor will come in that day, saying,

Have we not prophesied in thy name? . . . and in thy name done many wonderful works? {Matt. 7:22}

but Jesus will say unto them,

I never knew you: depart from me {Matt. 7:22}.

They never had any acquaintance with Christ -- had no personal dealing with Him. Have you, dear friends, known this personal intimacy with Jesus? Have you known what it is to be *reconciled* to God through the death of His Son? Those who know Christ, however feebly, do not hesitate to cast themselves into His open arms, and such always prove Him to be a Friend that loveth at all times, a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

“Happy they who trust in Jesus!
Sweet their portion is and sure;
When the foe on others seizes,
He will keep His own secure:
Happy people!
Even though despised and poor.”

Another feature in Christ's sheep is, that having heard His voice, and being assured that Christ knows them, it leads to practical action -- *they follow Christ*. This is not following rules, creeds, ordinances, however true in themselves they may be, but Christ. It is not following men, however godly they may be, further than they are following Christ. This Satan hates, and tries to hinder. He would sometimes use even Christian people, who may be in a bad state of soul, to hinder others from *wholly*

following the Lord. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. We are kept here for no other object than to follow Christ; not to follow our own inclinations, nor to follow other saints, but to follow Christ. This marks Christ's sheep. Jesus said,

They follow me {John 10:27}.

Do we know what this is? Are we searching the Scriptures to find out His steps, that we may follow Him? Are we, through honor and dishonor, seeking only to please Him? Are we aiming to be

meek and lowly in heart {Matt. 11:29}

as He was? to take His yoke upon us, and learn of Him? We are told that Christ's sheep are thus exercised; they follow Christ. It does not say they ought to do so, but that they do follow Christ. This shows them to be Christ's sheep.

Now, mark the security of Christ's sheep.

1st. They have everlasting life.

I give unto them *eternal* life {John 10:28}.

This is His gift. It is in no way earned or deserved. No.

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord {Rom. 6:23}.

Eternal life, then, comes to us in the way of gift. Christ does not give less. It is not life for a day or a year, but for ever -- eternal life. Your life is hid with Christ in God. Christ is our life. Christ is the Giver, the sinner the receiver. My dear reader, have you really received this gift of God? Have you *eternal* life? I trust you will not rest for a moment, till you are certain that you have eternal life. Oh, you must have eternal life, or you will be in everlasting burnings!

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

2nd.

They shall never perish {John 10:28}.

What perfect rest and peace this gives the soul; for He is faithful that promised; He cannot deny Himself. David's fear and distress were not a little that he would one day perish by the hand of Saul; but the true believer need have no misgiving as to the eternal future. He who is almighty in power and perfect in love says,

They shall never perish.

Observe, it is absolute and unconditional --

They shall never perish.

Dear trembling believer, you cannot be lost. You are in Christ. You have eternal life, and Christ declares you shall never perish.

He died for you. His blood cleanseth from all sin.

Your life is hid with Christ in God {Col. 3:3}.

What more can you need to give you perfect rest of soul?

3rd.

Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand {John 10:28}.

The word man is in italics. It shows us that no power shall be able to separate us from Christ's keeping.

"Not all that earth or hell can say,
Shall turn His heart of love away."

When He said,

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37},
it implied three things: --

1st. I will receive.

2nd. I will hold him fast; and

3rd. I will never give him up --
in no wise cast out.

So here He says,

None shall pluck them out of my hand.

What perfect security this gives! Surely it is a threefold cord, that can never be broken.

1st. The present possession of
eternal life.

2nd. The promise of the faithful and Good Shepherd --
They shall never perish.

3rd. Christ's own almighty hand keeping firmly in its grasp --
None shall pluck them out of my hand.

All dear children of God do not enter into the joy of these precious realities. They read men's books, and embrace men's opinions, instead of going only to the Scriptures for God's mind, and resting on His precious words about Jesus, which can never pass away.

"NEVER perish!" words of mercy,
Coming from the lips of One
Who, though here a homeless stranger,
Fills the high eternal throne;
Brightness of the Father's glory,
God and man in One combined;
Faithful Shepherd of the chosen,
Safe are those to Him assigned.

"Never perish!" words of sweetness,
Dissipating every fear;
Filling all with joy and gladness,
Who the Shepherd's voice can hear;
Bringing richest consolation
To the soul fatigued, oppressed;
Sweet refreshment to the fainting,
And to weary spirits rest.

"Never perish!" words of power;
Satan now I can defy:
Safe my soul beyond my keeping,
Hid with Christ in God on high.
Come what will, *I'm safe for ever* --
'Tis the promise of my God;
Written in His word unfailing,
Sealed with Jesus' precious blood.

The Birth of Jesus

Where is he that is born King of the Jews? (Matt. 2:2).

The birth of Jesus was an event as full of love as it was deep in wisdom and humiliation; but it was what Jehovah had ages before promised, and patriarchs had long looked for. When man disobeyed his Maker, and fell under Satan's power, God, in boundless grace, lighted up the dark and hopeless scene with the most merciful declaration, that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head; thus announcing a Redeemer for fallen man, and that He should be born of a woman. Afterward, the Lord taught Abraham that the promised Seed should be through him and his much-loved son Isaac.

In Isaac shall thy seed be called {Gen. 21:12}.

After this, it was revealed to David that the promised Seed should be of the fruit of his loins, and also that after His death and resurrection He should sit upon Israel's throne. At a later period, the prophet Isaiah was moved by the Holy Ghost to predict that the Savior would be a virgin's son:

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel {Isa. 7:14}.

And more than this, for he also spake of the Godhead of Christ, as well as His reigning in power, as the King of the Jews, on the throne of His father David, saying,

Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this (Isa. 9:6, 7).

Still later, the prophet Micah was instructed to inform God's people of the locality where Jesus should be born:

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2).

From these Scriptures we see that the Messiah would be born of a woman -- God and man in one person -- a virgin's son -- born in Bethlehem -- of the seed of Abraham -- of the lineage of David -- whose goings forth have been from everlasting -- that He shall sit on the throne of His father David, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.

We can thus enter a little into the question of the wise men,

Where is He that is born King of the Jews? {Matt. 2:2}

In the last dispensation many were looking forward to the coming of Messiah to reign in glory. They expected the fulfilment of the prophetic Scriptures concerning His kingdom, and overlooked the path of humiliation, suffering, blood-shedding, and death, as Messiah's way to David's throne. They did not see that God's only

way of setting man in blessing before Him was through death and resurrection. There were, however, a few that

looked for *redemption* in Jerusalem {Luke 2:38}.

In this chapter we find three classes of character brought before us:

1. Herod;
2. The chief priests and scribes;
3. The wise men;

-- which, by the Lord's help, it may be profitable for us to consider.

1. HEROD. Herod was king at Jerusalem; he was, therefore, exceedingly moved at the announcement that the King of the Jews was born. It touched him very closely; for he knew that if the true Messiah were come, he could no longer be king himself. Besides, the sound of God's King having come was enough to alarm the conscience, and awaken fear and dread. Others felt the same. We are therefore told that,

when Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him {Matt. 2:3}.

There were no thunderings or lightnings -- no threatenings -- no sound of alarm; yet they were troubled. Angels had sung,

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men {Luke 2:14}.

A believing man afterwards exclaimed,

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: . . . for mine eyes have seen thy salvation {Luke 2:29, 30}.

Yet

Herod and all Jerusalem were troubled {see Matt. 2:3}.

The king's troubled state of mind led him to make inquiry. He first gathered those together whom he judged best able to give him information, and demanded of them where Christ should be born. But though their reply was correct, it did not relieve his trouble. He then made diligent inquiry of the wise men, but their reply must have only tended to confirm the fact that Messiah was really come. What could Herod do? His perplexity was great; fear and sorrow were experienced by him; but with all the amount of unquestionable evidence before him, he did not think the Messiah worth seeking. He therefore dismissed the wise men, that they should seek the young child; but it was not in the king's heart to go a step on such an errand.

Bring me word again,
said the king,

that I may come and worship Him also {Matt. 2:8}.

If I find so-and-so, *then* I'll worship," thought Herod. He had no higher thought, and this was his only relief for a troubled mind. Poor Herod! The real state of his soul was afterwards made manifest: pride kindled into a flame the enmity against God and

against His Christ which dwelt in his unregenerate heart; he became

exceeding wroth {Matt. 2:16},

and could only vent his rage by commanding that every young child in Bethlehem, and all the coasts thereof, should be put to death; thus expecting to get rid of his troubles by killing Him who was born King of the Jews. Such is man. Such has been, and still is, the enmity of the carnal mind to the blessed Christ of God. Men hear the faithful saying, that

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners
{1 Tim. 1:15};

they are exercised about the report for a while, fears lay hold on them, and they are troubled. They make inquiry -- they hear the Scriptures read and expounded -- they turn to God's servants, and listen to their statements on these matters -- they hear them say that it is their chiefest joy to contemplate and adoringly worship the Savior of sinners, and they seek to quiet their troubled spirits by promising to themselves to worship also at some future time. But, as in Herod's case, that time never comes. Like him, their convictions are not deep, being more from the force of circumstances and the influence of others, than from personal exercise before God; they therefore think of nothing higher than worshipping before men. There is no earnest desire for forgiveness of sins -- no longing for the removal of guilt -- no consideration of how matters really are between their own souls and the living God; they have no concern beyond some vague ideas of worship, places of worship, forms of worship, and the like. However, this state of mind having been brought about by circumstances, it is only for circumstances to change, and they change also. Like the early dew, such superficial impressions quickly pass away; the natural enmity to Christ easily manifests itself, and they soon cry out in spirit, with the Christless crowd around,

Not this man, but Barabbas {John 18:40}!

My reader, may I ask if you have ever been troubled when you have heard the gospel of God? If so, may I also affectionately ask you to examine into the cause of your trouble? Has it arisen from fear of change in your outward circumstances? or has it been from a deep conscientious sense of your having sinned against God, and therefore being justly exposed to His eternal condemnation? The last is the godly sorrow, that worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of; and if such be your experience, you will not be content that others should seek the Savior, and bring you word again, but you will seek Him for yourself. Your need will compel you. Your heartfelt cry will be,

Lord, save, or I perish {see Matt. 8:25}!

You will take refuge in the Lord Jesus Christ to save you. You will not be satisfied at merely outwardly mingling with others in worship; you will not rest till you know the forgiveness of your sins and peace with God.

Oh, my reader, beware of hypocrisy! Remember Herod. Beware of anything less than coming to Christ to save you. Do not be content at feeling a little troubled, or with a little inquiry into Scripture, or of resting in some good intentions, or any well-meant promises as to the future; yea, I repeat, beware of anything short

of coming to Jesus for the salvation of your soul. Then, and then only, will you be safe; for He said,

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37}.

2. THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES. There was neither trouble, nor inquiry, nor wrath, manifested by these persons. Quiet and unconcerned, with Scripture ready upon their lips, they cared no more about the Messiah than they did about Herod. Yet they had a remarkable knowledge of Scripture. They could tell *where* Christ should be born. They heard the solemn announcement that the Messiah was come. They listened to the wise men's testimony, that the God of heaven and earth had commanded a star to move out of its accustomed sphere to guide them, and yet they were unmoved and unconcerned. Their knowledge of the letter of Scripture had puffed them up. In their folly they thought themselves wise, and knew not that they were miserable, blind, and naked: One might have thought that such a momentous matter as the birth of Christ would have stirred up the hardest hearts; but no! man's motto is, "Present gratification, without reference to the eternal future." These scribes were accredited by men, honored by the king; they felt that they held the key of knowledge, were masters in Israel, were greeted by the people's "Rabbi," and this was enough; for they sought only "present gratification," and cared not for "the eternal future."

It is to be feared that there are many of this class in the present day. They possess some knowledge of Scripture, can answer many questions even about the Savior, and are quiet and unconcerned when others around them are much troubled. They know not their real need. They compare themselves with the ignorant idolater, and think themselves wise. They flatter themselves that they have been born in a Christian country, had Christian forefathers, have received a religious education, and attend an orthodox ministry; and therefore are not ignorant of spiritual matters. But with all their fancied knowledge,

they are ignorant of God's righteousness {see Rom. 10:3}.

They know not that, if weighed in God's balance, they must be found wanting. They are ignorant of the fact, that all their best performances are only splendid sins. They are not aware that they must be born again. They know not the gift of God. They are ignorant that the thrice Holy God cannot accept any excuse for sin, and can accredit no other standard of righteousness than His own unsullied holiness. They therefore go about to establish their own righteousness, and do not submit to the righteousness of God, even CHRIST, who is

the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:4).

Oh, my reader, flee from all these snares of the great deceiver. Listen to the word of the living God that will never pass away. Remember there is salvation in none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only way. There is no other entrance to glory. The question of such eternal importance is not what you know, or what people think of you, but what you think of CHRIST. Oh, ponder the decisive words of the apostle,

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed {see 1 Cor. 16:22}!

3. THE WISE MEN. Whatever were the peculiar characteristics of these men, they were in the best sense wise men. They were guided by Divine light and wisdom. They had to do with God. When they saw the star move, they were assured that God was leading them; and they happily experienced that He led them to the Savior. They sought for Jesus. Nothing could hinder them. Christ Himself was the one object of their souls, and they found Him. They owned Him as the mighty God. They worshipped Him. They served Him with their substance as well as their hearts. It was to Christ they presented their gold, frankincense, and myrrh. We may also notice another thing in these wise men, they obeyed God rather than man; for being warned of God that they should not return to Herod (as he commanded), they departed into their own country another way. The account of these wise men is very simple and brief, but their ways stand in remarkable contrast with the other classes of character that are here clustered together.

Oh, my reader! while I warn you against the pernicious ways of Herod and the scribes, I entreat you solemnly to consider whether you are like these wise men. They submitted to God's teaching; have you? They sought and found the Savior; have you? They worshipped Him, and served Him with their costliest goods; have you? When they found that man commanded one thing and God another, they obeyed God rather than man; have you?

Hitherto we have only looked at the King of the Jews in reference to His birth; but grand and glorious as that event was, we afterwards see Him in a position far more blessed for our contemplation than even that. I refer to Calvary's cross. Yes, it is the cross of Christ that is the happy meeting-place between God and man. No death of the cross, there could have been no triumph over death. No death of the cross, there could have been no salvation from hell. No death of the cross, this world would have been without one cheering ray as to the future. No death of the cross, not one sinner could have ever reached the mansions of glory. But the blessed gospel declares that Christ has died. The Scriptures most prominently set forth the eternal value of Christ's death, and our Lord taught the same thing. He said,

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit {John 12:24}.

The believer's peace with God is only through the atoning work of Christ. We are justified by His blood, sanctified by His blood; we have access into God's presence, where our High Priest is, by His blood. It is in the death of Jesus we see God's wondrous love to man so abundantly manifested. There we see that Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. There we see that the King of the Jews died for that nation. There we see that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. There we see God's infinite hatred of sin, and His amazing love to sinners. There Jesus bare our sins in His own body. There He was made sin for us. There His soul was made an offering for sin. There He once suffered under God's wrath, that we might receive eternal peace and blessing.

The King of the Jews was put to death on the accursed tree; for

it was expedient that one man should *die* for the people, and that *the whole nation* perish not . . . and not for that nation

only, but that He should gather together in one *the children of God* that were scattered abroad {see John 11:49, 52}.

On that solemn occasion cruel Pilate appeared to be conscious that Jesus was the King of the Jews; for he not only asked the blessed Lord if He were the King of the Jews, but just before he delivered Him to be crucified, he turned to the people, saying,

Behold your King! {John 19:14}

Shall I crucify your King? {John 19:15}

Pilate also wrote a title, and put it on the cross, in the three leading languages of the world, and the writing was,

JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS {John 19:19};

and so steadfast was Pilate in His purpose, that when the chief priests said unto him,

Write not, The King of the Jews; but that He said, I am King of the Jews {John 19:21},

he replied,

What I have written I have written {John 19:22}.

God, doubtless, had a purpose in all this; and though the nation of Israel refused to own their King then, it will yet be their joy, at Christ's second coming, to know that they have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (See Rom. 11:27).

"Smitten, stricken, and afflicted,
See Him hanging on the tree;
'Tis the Christ by men rejected,
Yes, my soul, 'tis He, 'tis He!"

But where is the King of the Jews *now*? He *was* in Bethlehem's stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and worshipped by the wise men. He was recognized by a guileless Israelite as

the Son of God and the King of Israel {see John 1:49}.

As the meek and lowly King, riding on an ass over the Mount of Olives, He was worshipped as

the King that cometh in the name of the Lord {Luke 19:38}.

He was covered with a purple robe, and mocked with a crown of thorns. He was publicly crucified with malefactors, outside the gate of Jerusalem, as

Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews {John 19:19}.

But where, I ask, is the King of the Jews *now*? He is no longer on the cross, no longer in the sepulcher; but though crucified in weakness, He rose from the dead by almighty power, spoiled principalities and powers, and, in risen beauty and glory, amid the ceaseless rejoicings of the unnumbered dazzling hosts of heaven, the King of the Jews was welcomed to the throne of the Majesty of the heavens, and crowned with glory and honor. Israel's rejected King, then, is risen -- raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and exalted to the highest heavens. But the Jews, as yet, know it not. They are still in blindness and unbelief, fulfilling the prophecy of Hosea:

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and

without an image (pillar), and without an ephod, and without teraphim (Hos. 3:4).

They are still scattered among the Gentiles, while their holy city is in heaps because of their sin; they are

broken off because of unbelief {see Rom. 11:20}.

But we are told that God is able to graft them in again. Yes, God is able to cause the scales to fall from their eyes, so that a nation may be born at once. He is able to gather the outcasts of Israel, and bring them into their own land.

Afterward,

saith Hosea in the next verse,

shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days {Hos. 3:5}.

Then the Jews will be joyful in their king, who will

reign . . . before His ancients gloriously {Isa. 24:23};

and

Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit {Isa. 27:6}.

But then it will not be on carnal grounds, but in free, sovereign grace, through the redemption-work of Him who died for that nation. They will then know Christ crucified to be their sacrifice, Christ risen to be their lawgiver, Christ exalted to be their High Priest, Christ glorified to be their King. They will then experience the blessings of the new covenant, spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet:

After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. . . . They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:33, 34).

Now, while the Lord Jesus is rejected by the nation of the Jews, God is sending His gospel into all the world, to gather out of the Gentiles a people for His name. A Jew here and there receives the gospel, as many have before; so that the Church of God is formed both of Jews and Gentiles, united in one body in Christ -- one new man -- made nigh to God in Christ and by His blood.

The reign of Christ was spoken of by the angel to Mary in connection with His birth:

Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:31-33).

We can therefore understand why Peter referred to the Lord's appearing, when addressing the people at Jerusalem, saying,

He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began {Acts 3:20}.

To these times of restitution we are rapidly hastening. The Lord will soon descend from heaven. His Church, His beloved bride,

will be caught up to meet Him in the air. He will appear in glory, and His saints with Him. As King of the Jews, He will reign over the house of Jacob. As the last Adam, creation shall be manifestly in subjection to Him, being delivered from the bondage of corruption; and as King over all the earth, all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him; for with flaming fire and vengeance He shall put all enemies under His feet. Happy are those who can now sincerely say,

Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly {see Rev. 22:20}.

Now, dear reader, He saves to the uttermost, and He will save *you*, if you come to Him. Oh, may the language of your heart be

--

"A guilty, weak, and helpless worm,
On thy kind arms I fall;
Thou art my Lord and righteousness,
My Savior, and my all."

Peace for the Anxious; Or, the Serpent of Brass

And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived (Num. 21:8, 9).

The only way of salvation is most plainly set before us in various parts of the Old Testament Scriptures. Let us look at some of them. We are told that Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, by coming before God with the sacrifice of a lamb; while Cain, with all his efforts to bring the fruit of his own toil, was rejected. Noah and his family were saved by being inside the ark which God had commanded to be built, while every person outside the ark perished. Lot's mocking sons-in-law died under God's fiery judgment of Sodom, because they remained in the place which God had said he would destroy, and refused to escape for their lives. The Israelites in Egypt were saved from the vengeance of the destroying angel, because they took shelter in God's only remedy -- the blood of the lamb. The manslayer escaped the forfeit of his life by fleeing to the city of refuge. The loathsome leper was at once cleansed by being sprinkled with blood. Rahab was saved in the destruction of Jericho, because the scarlet line was in her window. The serpent of brass set upon a pole was another testimony to the simple way of eternal salvation, which God provided for sinful men.

Many true-hearted souls have not peace with God, because they do not see the simplicity of the gospel. They do not allow their thoughts to be regulated by the written word of God, as the only standard of truth, or regard the Holy Spirit as the only Teacher and Revealer of the things of Christ; consequently there is no fixedness of thought, and no solid rest for their troubled minds. Unless the conscience be thoroughly convicted of the total ruin and depravity of the natural man, it is not prepared to receive the full testimony of God's abounding grace; and unless the mind be freed from human opinions, it will not perceive the beautiful simplicity of the gospel of God! Hence it is that so many sincere souls, who have been quickened by the Holy Ghost, go doubting and fearing nearly all their days. They either look within for certain feelings, attainments, evidences, and the like, instead of looking wholly to Christ; or, if they look to Christ, they think that something else is required, instead of receiving simply what God says in His word concerning the finished work of His beloved Son, and the safety and security of all those who come unto God by Him. Let no burdened sinner expect peace with God but by looking wholly to Christ crucified and risen, and believing God's record of the value of His finished work on the cross.

The story of the serpent of brass is calculated, by the Spirit's teaching, to give peace to anxious souls, because it so plainly sets forth the way of God in grace with men as ruined sinners. Our blessed Lord expounded it to Nicodemus, so that we have not only the inspired narrative, but also the Divine comment upon it, as teaching us the only way of eternal salvation. The testimony of Moses, by the Spirit in the Old Testament, and the explanation of

Christ Himself in the New, stamp the subject with the deepest interest and importance. Little, perhaps, did the ancient lawgiver feel, when lifting up the brazen serpent in order that the dying Israelite might behold it and live, that he was shadowing forth that unequalled event, when Christ, in unparalleled love, was willingly lifted up upon the cross for the salvation of lost sinners. But so it was, as the Lord Himself touchingly testified, when He said,

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:14, 15).

There are three points in this narrative which demand our solemn consideration.

1. The condition of the people.
2. The remedy God provided.
3. The effects.

1. THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE. The people had sinned. They had murmured against God, and justly brought His judgment and wrath upon them. They were, therefore, under sentence of death; for sin and death are connected together. The wages of sin always has been, and always will be, death. Much people of Israel had died, and many more were dying; they were under the influence of the serpent's bite, and it was mortal. Nothing, therefore, could be more hopeless than their state; they might not have believed it, but so it was. They might have tried human remedies, because man always contrives to better his present distress if he can; but we may be sure that these remedies all failed. They were made to feel that the serpent's bite was beyond their power of healing; therefore they asked Moses to take away the serpents from them: but this was not God's way of meeting the case. The people, then, had sinned, were mortally wounded, without any power of ameliorating their condition, and without any human hope of deliverance.

And such, too, is man's real condition before God now. The bitten, dying Israelites present to us a touching picture of tens of thousands, yea, millions, around us now. Man has sinned. He is a sinner in a threefold sense. He is a sinner by birth, as a descendant of fallen parents; a sinner by practice, as having actually transgressed God's holy commands; and a sinner in heart, as having sin dwelling in him, so that he is inwardly desperately wicked. But more than this, for most persons have added to all these the crowning sin of not believing in the only-begotten Son of God -- not receiving that Savior whom God hath sent. The Holy Spirit has come to convict men that they are sinners, to show them that they are dead in trespasses and sins, and exposed to eternal death and condemnation. Surely nothing can be more hopeless than man's condition as under sin and death; nothing can be more

helpless, because, with all his inventions to better his circumstances, he has never yet devised a remedy for death. He diligently projects moral schemes for lopping off the wide-spreading branches of outward infamy, but the stump still remains the stock of a corrupt tree. Man cannot devise a cure for death. He tries to smooth the dying pillow with the tear of sympathy, and refreshing cordials; he may embellish the corpse with the costliest ornaments, and the sweetest spices; he can make the most attractive display at the grave; he can garnish the sepulcher with skillful adornments; but he cannot cure the serpent's bite, he cannot triumph over death. He sees death all around him, and feels dying himself, and he is without strength and without hope in the world.

Men little think what an admission they make when they say, "We are sinners." It really means, we have death working in us because we have sinned -- we are dead in trespasses and sins, and on the way to eternal death. Such is really the meaning of the common expression, "I know that I'm a sinner." Oh that the Holy Spirit would tear away the veil of ignorance and unbelief from men's minds, and so convict multitudes everywhere, that, like the prophet of old, they may cry out,

Woe is me! for I am undone {Isa. 6:5}.

Our condition, then, naturally, is similar to that of the bitten Israelites. They had sinned, so have we. They were guilty before God, so are we. They were justly condemned, so are we. They were dying because of their sin, so are we. They were unable to save themselves, so are we. Neither they nor ourselves had any hope whatever, till God, in free, boundless mercy, provided a remedy. Let us now consider --

2. THE REMEDY GOD PROVIDED. Why should God provide a remedy? Did the people deserve it? No. They had sinned, and merited God's righteous indignation. But their need, their helpless state, moved God's compassion and mercy, and He brought life and salvation to the dying and needy. The thought of the people was merely to have the serpents taken away from them -- they only thought of some improvement in their present circumstances; but God's thoughts of love and pity are far higher than this. His way is to give life to dying souls -- to abolish death; He therefore provided such a remedy, that whoever LOOKED upon it LIVED. This is a remedy worthy of the God of resurrection. It never entered into man's heart to conceive a remedy so perfect, so suitable; so glorious, so abundant in mercy.

The Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live {Num. 21:8}.

The remedy was simple, and the cure immediate. It was not a question of their doings, experiences, or evidences; it was look and live. They were commanded to look outside themselves, straight to the object set before them, and, though at the point of death, they immediately lived. Those who felt the mortal wound inflicted by the fiery serpent had simply to behold the serpent of brass set upon the pole, and death in them gave place to life.

The remedy then was one, only one. It was lifted up between earth and heaven. It was wholly of God's providing. The benefit was conferred by simply looking. It was perfect and instantaneous in its cure. It needed nothing to be added to it. It was free to every

bitten man, without money and without price. No one tried it in vain. Those who did not behold it died.

Such is God's remedy for dying souls now. It is Jesus only. He has been lifted up between earth and heaven. He died for sinners -- for those who are dead in trespasses and sins. This only remedy is entirely of God's providing. His compassion and free grace sent forth the Savior; for

God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us {Rom. 5:8}.

It is sin that is the plague of our hearts, and in Jesus crucified we see sin condemned, and removed for ever from us; for there God hath made Christ

to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him {2 Cor. 5:21}.

On the cross it was that Christ was lifted up, that He might bring us to God.

The benefits, too, of God's salvation are realized by simply looking. It is,

Look unto me, and be ye saved {Isa. 45:22}.

Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world {John 1:29}.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved {Acts 16:31}.

By Him; all that *believe* are justified from all things {Acts 13:39}.

Him that *cometh* to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37}.

It is free to every one who desires it.

He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life {John 6:47}

By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved {John 10:9}.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

God also gives an immediate and perfect cure.

He that believeth on me, said Jesus,

hath everlasting life {John 6:47}.

He that believeth is justified by His blood, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life; for by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. He hath obtained eternal redemption for us.

The Israelites, by looking to the serpent of brass, only had temporal life; but, by looking unto the Lord Jesus, we have eternal life. This is the mercy of the gospel, as our Lord declared,

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life {John 3:14, 15}.

It is not, then, ordinances, duties, self-denial, outward zeal, however proper these things may be in their place, but Christ and Him crucified that meets the sinner's need. He alone has triumphed over death. He only is the life, the truth, the way to the Father. He is the only Mediator between God and men. His blood the only fountain for sin and uncleanness. His death alone satisfied

Divine justice. On Jesus, on the cross, God's fierce wrath was poured out, and His infinite holiness and truth vindicated. It is the death of Jesus on the cross that fully manifests man's ungodliness, and fully reveals God's abounding grace. Nowhere is sin's foul blackness so seen as in the cross, and nowhere else is sin condemned and put away. Without the death of the cross, Jesus taught there could be no salvation; and it was to the cross alone that He directed Nicodemus for eternal life. The apostles preached

Christ crucified {1 Cor. 1:23};

and Paul said,

God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world {Gal. 6:14}.

"The cross, its burthen -- oh, how great!
No strength but His could bear its weight;
No love but His would undertake
To bear it for the sinner's sake."

The testimony of Jesus Himself, the records of the Old and New Testaments, the witness of prophets and apostles, all concur in directing the serpent-bitten, sin-sick soul to the Lord Jesus who was crucified, and to Him alone, for everlasting life; and blessed indeed are those, who, by faith in Him, escape eternal death so fully deserved, and receive eternal life so wholly undeserved, but freely given.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him {John 3:36}.

3. THE EFFECTS.

It came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived {Num. 21:9}.

His despairing, languishing heart revived. As soon as he was conscious that he lived, the fear of death departed, and peace took possession of his mind. Health and vigour returned for service and conflict, he overcame the enemies of the Lord, and went onward to the promised land. But further; having proved how effectual simply beholding the serpent of brass was, he, doubtless, was anxious that others perishing around him should enjoy the same blessing.

Applying this instruction to ourselves, by the light of our Lord's exposition of it, it is clear that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was lifted up on the cross, has eternal life. He has a new life in him. He is a new creation. He is born again. It is a fact, that by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we have life.

He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life {1 John 5:12}.

It is not merely a change of views, but life -- eternal life -- that the believer in Christ receives.

The present possession of eternal life is connected with a remarkable change both in experience and action. Conversion is really a transition from death unto life. Those who had previously prided themselves on their good qualities, now see themselves to be vile and worthless; and that blessed Savior, whom they had so long despised and rejected, now becomes incomparably precious and lovely. That God, once so dreaded, is worshipped and adored

as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. His word and ways honored, and His people, once slighted if not persecuted, are now beloved objects of interest and affection. These are some of the workings of Divine life in the soul. But all who have life have not peace; they have eternal life, but do not know it. Such a sense of their own evil hearts and ways presses upon them; they cannot suppose it possible that such vile persons can have eternal life; yet they look to Christ, and cannot give Him up; they little think that the self-humbling experience they have is the effect of their having life. There are many such now, and there were also in the apostles' days; hence John wrote,

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; *that ye may know that ye have eternal life* {1 John 5:13};

and he assured them that they might know that they had passed from death unto life, because they loved the brethren {1 John 3:14}.

I have said that when the Israelite who had looked to the serpent of brass knew that he lived, fear of death left him, and peace took possession of his mind. So now, when the believer knows that he is pardoned, justified, and accepted, by simply looking to Christ in glory, who was crucified, peace flows into his heart. We have

joy and peace in believing {Rom. 15:13};

being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ {Rom. 5:1}.

Fear of death is removed when the soul looks only and simply to the Lord Jesus, and believes that He has died in his stead, and suffered for his sins on the cross. The believer thus knows, that whatever changes may take place, his life is hid with Christ in God, and though he may sleep in Jesus, yet he shall never see death. This fills the languishing spirit with consolation and peace, as well as strength for the service of God, and running the heavenly race.

Oh the blessedness of having eternal life by simply looking to the Lord Jesus who was lifted up! Because we have life, we more or less act according to the mind of God. We learn our vileness in the flesh, and hide in Christ our righteousness; we know the flesh has been condemned and crucified, but know Christ is our life. We experience infirmity and weakness, but know that Christ is our strength. We grieve that we are sometimes the subjects of folly and error, but know that Christ is our wisdom. We are painfully sensible of sinning, but are assured that Christ is our Advocate with the Father. We are tempted by Satan to the unbelieving thought; "we shall one day perish"; but are comforted by that Promise of the Almighty Savior,

They shall never perish {John 10:28};

and when well-nigh overwhelmed by

fightings without and fears within {see 2 Cor. 7:5},

we rely on Him who is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him. Thus Christ is all to the Christian: and though when looking at self he may cry,

O wretched man that I am! {Rom. 7:24}

when looking to the Savior who was crucified he can say,

The Lord is my light and my salvation {Psa. 27:1}.

“So great, so vast a sacrifice,
May well my hope revive;
If God’s own Son thus bleeds and dies,
The sinner sure must live.”

FELLOW CHRISTIANS! we have life -- spiritual, eternal life; let us, then, walk and act in the Spirit. Let us show that we belong to Jesus, that we have died, as regards the flesh, in Him, and that we have life by and in a risen, glorified Savior. We must abide in Christ, live upon Christ, feed on Christ, draw from Christ, if we would walk like Christ. This new life must be nourished, the spiritual energies used, the new-born affections exercised, if we would be strong and flourishing as servants of Christ. We need not, could not, work for life, because we have life. We could not be Christians if we had not looked to the Son of man lifted up, and had life. The word of Christ informs and strengthens the new life; the flesh and blood of Christ nourish the new life; the way of faith is the acting out of the new life; the Lord’s return from heaven is that for which the new life waits.

Seeing that we have eternal life by beholding the Lamb of God, let us seek to bring others to taste and enjoy the same blessings. Oh, how earnestly must the healed Israelite have ran far and near to bring his bitten friends to behold the serpent of brass! How quickly might he be seen throwing back the curtain of his neighbour’s tent, that the dying, gasping ones might take one look and live! What a reality God’s remedy was to them! And is it less so to us? Oh no, my brethren! let it then be our daily, fervent, untiring labour to present Christ to all around us.

But some of my readers cannot say that they have life. The Son of man has been lifted up to give life to sin-sick, dying souls, but they refuse to look and live. How sad is your portion! How awfully dark is your prospect! God’s love is despised by you. His pity and compassion are not welcomed. His gospel is not received. The sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus are despised, and you are still in your sins, daily sinking under the serpent’s bite, dying under its influence, and rapidly hastening to the bar of God’s judgment, to receive your final sentence, and eternal doom. But it may be that some may say, “I know I am a sinner. I am sure I have broken God’s laws. I have merited His displeasure. My heart trembles at death. I shudder at the thought of judgment. Can I be saved? Is there hope for me? Is there any possibility that I can have eternal life?” Yes! yes! dear soul; Jesus died for such as you. He was nailed to the cross for the ungodly. Every sin-convicted soul that looks to Him He saves.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved
{Acts 16:31}.

“A dying, risen Jesus,
Seen by the eye of faith,
At once from anguish frees us,
And saves the soul from death.
How gracious this Physician!
His grace He’ll freely give;
He makes no hard condition,
’Tis only look and live.”

Faith's Choice

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love (S of S 2:3, 4).

The world may be compared to a forest containing a great variety of trees; and the speaker here boasts of the superiority of the tree he has made choice of over all other trees of the wood. He finds that the apple tree (or rather the citron tree) meets all his necessities; and not only affords him shelter and safety, but yields sweet and refreshing fruit. No tree, not even the lofty pine, or the majestic cedar, so suits him as the citron tree; for there not only is he sheltered from the sun's burning rays, but his hunger and thirst are fully satisfied.

Man naturally craves something. He thirsts for what he has not, and has an aching void in his heart, which he vainly seeks to satisfy. As the powers of intellect become developed, and tastes and inclinations formed, so people may be seen selecting objects to interest their minds and meet their wishes. But turn where they may, and have what they may, their experience is that all under the sun is vanity and vexation of spirit. Still, if one object brings its sorrowful disappointment, they pursue another, and it is to be feared that many fritter away life with no better experience than running from one thing to another in this evil world, seeking rest, and finding none.

Some persons most diligently addict themselves to a money-making system. Money is their heart's object. Gold is their god. Every thing with them is valueless, except it increase their wealth. Oh, how many in this forest-like world have selected for themselves a tree which may be called money! They strive for rest, but never obtain it. They are said to be rich, but they often feel very poor. Others may think them satisfied, but they know nothing of true contentment. They often painfully exemplify that

the love of money is the root of all evil {1 Tim. 6:10};

and prove the truth of the inspired writer, that

he that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase {Eccl. 5:10}.

There are others who do not care so much for money as for pleasure. They make everything bend to self-indulgence. They pity the covetous and miserly, while they squander their substance in revelry and mirth. They are devoted to the pleasures of sin, and know nothing higher than the gratification of the lust of the flesh, the lust of eyes, and the pride of life. Of all the trees of the wood, none suits them like the tree of pleasure. Their pursuits are various, according to their means and tastes; but ease and pleasure they will have if possible. They know nothing better than present indulgence.

Others may be found who care little either for wealth, or the fascinating pleasures of fashionable life. Their deportment is quiet and perhaps retiring, but their minds eagerly pursue science, as it is called. Time, wealth, health, and everything else are easily sacrificed to this object. They find its present interest sufficiently encouraging to promote diligent perseverance, and its supposed

harmlessness becomes an excuse for the most moral to engage in it to any extent. Science is their heart's choice. They know not that the Scripture classes the desires of the mind with the lusts of the flesh (Eph. 2:3), and, perhaps, seldom consider that when they die, their accumulated masses of philosophy die with them.

There is another class of persons who make fame their object. Ambitious of leaving a great name behind them, they are almost willing to accomplish it at the expense of self-sacrifice. As they become loaded with honors, so they judge their course prosperous; until at length the cold hand of death proves, to their eternal sorrow, that

man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish {Psa. 49:12}.

Such are some of the classes of character around us, and whether it be money, pleasure, science, or fame, they stand like so many trees in a large forest, and some make choice of one, and some of another. But there is a tree, once planted at Golgotha, differing from every other, because of the present comfort and eternal blessing it imparts to all who take refuge there. It is the cross of the Son of God, who was crucified for sinners, that is the object of the believer's choice. In vain does the awakened conscience find any other satisfying object. He knows that no amount of wealth can purchase peace; no earthly pleasure can relieve his heavy heart; no philosophical researches can ease him of his weight of guilt; no honor from men can secure to him the immortal honor of being a child of God. In Immanuel's cross, he reads that God is love. In the bleeding Savior, he beholds God providing a sin-cleansing fountain. On Calvary's tree, he sees sins judged and purged for every one that believeth. In the person of Jesus crucified, he finds infinite love, holiness, and truth. The more he knows of Jesus, the more he learns of His perfect hatred of sin, and boundless grace to sinners. His self-sacrificing devotedness, in life and in death, shows us how He pleased not Himself, but loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. The spotlessness of His person, the amazing love of His heart, the perfection of His work, the suitability of His offices, so fill the believer with joy and gladness, that he can truly exclaim,

As the citron tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons {S of S 2:3}.

In our meditation on these verses, we shall find instruction concerning the believer's choice, his rest, his joy, his exercises, and his privileges. Let us consider each of these points separately.

1. THE BELIEVER'S CHOICE.

My beloved {S of S 2:3}.

There is none like the Lord Jesus to the believer. He sees nothing so attractive and glorious. Christ is the object of his heart's affections. In Him he beholds the glory of God, the grace of God, the wisdom of God, and the power of God. He finds Him to be

incomparably sweet. He esteems Christ as the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely. He has fled to Him for salvation, and found peace to his wounded soul through faith in His blood, so that he can truly say,

my beloved,

my Redeemer, my righteousness, and my life. Therefore, Christ is very dear to him. Among all the hosts of earth or heaven, he could point to Jesus and say,

This is my beloved, and this is my friend {S of S 5:16}.

Personal attachment to Jesus is the feeling of every true believer --
Unto you therefore which believe He is precious {1 Pet. 2:7}.

In whatever aspect Jesus is viewed, in every way, and in every office, He is the beloved of the believer's soul. He could part with everything rather than Christ. It is Christ Himself that the believer's heart is set upon, and his language is --

"Compared with Christ, in all beside
No comeliness I see;
My heart's desire, all-gracious Lord,
Is to be more like Thee.

"Loved of my Lord, for Him again
With love intense I burn;
Chosen of Thee ere time began,
I choose Thee in return.

"Less than Thyself will not suffice,
But Thou art ample store;
More than Thyself I cannot crave,
Nor canst Thou give me more."

2. THE BELIEVER'S REST.

I sat down {S of S 2:3}.

Jesus only gives rest to the burdened soul, and this He does according to His own word --

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I
will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

This the Christian realizes by faith, according to that Scripture,

We which have believed do enter into rest {Heb. 4:3}.

The speaker here says,

I sat down under His shadow {S of S 2:3};

and so the Christian not only knows that Christ crucified is the way of salvation, but he avails himself of it, he comes to Him, he enters in, he sits down in peace, because God provides rest for his sin-burdened conscience. The awakened soul, having proved the insufficiency of human expedients, finds in the cross of the Son of God every thing to remove his guilt, quiet his fears, and fill him with brightest hope. A Spirit-led sinner never loses the burden of his sins till he beholds Jesus crucified; for there, and there alone, he sees the holy God putting away sin to give him righteousness and peace, and presenting pardon to the guilty, life for the dead, and salvation for the lost. He comes, therefore, and finds rest. By faith he sits beneath the shadow of the cross, and finds himself for ever sheltered from the wrath of God, because Christ was made sin and a curse for him. He rests in the knowledge that God is his Savior, that his iniquities were laid upon Jesus, that the stroke of

Divine vengeance fell upon Him; thus suffering for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring him to God. In this way the believer realizes that God loves him, welcomes him, pardons, and justifies him from all things. Every question is answered, every fear removed, and love, gratitude, and hope take possession of his soul. Let none expect rest apart from a believing view of the value of the death of Christ; for --

"Here we rest, in wonder viewing
All our sins on Jesus laid;
And a full redemption flowing,
From the sacrifice He made."

There are many anxious souls who have not rest. Why is it? Because they seek it not by faith; they have not sat down under the shadow of the Lord Jesus Christ. They may be taken up with doctrines, and lack rest. They may be diligent in observing ordinances, and lack rest. They may be much exercised about their frames, feelings, and experiences, and yet lack rest. It must be Christ and His finished work to give rest -- Christ Himself -- Christ only. If they look anywhere else, they are off the true ground of rest. As long as the eye is turned inward upon self -- good self, bad self, or religious self, self in any form -- they must lack rest, because Christ is the only Savior, the only shelter, the only object of faith, the only resting-place that God has provided for sinners. The Divine verdict has long ago gone forth as to man's thoughts being only evil, and that continually, and his heart desperately wicked; in fact, that in him is no good. And when the soul takes this ground before God, and looks simply to His grace, that has met us in our ruin and helplessness in the death of Christ, it finds deliverance from slavish fear and guilt, and the fullest reason for confidence and rest. When we thus find rest, we begin to labour for Christ, and find that His yoke is easy, and His burden light.

3. THE BELIEVER'S JOY.

I sat down under His shadow with *great delight* {S of S 2:3}.

Christ is our joy, as well as our rest; yea, we joy in God through Him. We are commanded to rejoice in the Lord always. The assurance of our being heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ makes us very happy. We can say with the apostle Peter,

Whom having not seen, we love; in whom though now we
see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable
and full of glory {see 1 Pet. 1:8}.

The new song is put into our mouth. The contemplation of the eternal blessings we have in Christ our Lord gives us great delight. We envy not the worldling's mirth. We know that his joy is like the crackling of thorns under a pot, which continues but for a moment, and then expires for ever; but joy in the Holy Ghost, which we have in Christ, is sometimes too deep, too pure, and too full of blessing to be uttered.

How is it that believers are not happier? Because the death of Christ is not more simply and habitually contemplated as the foundation of all joy and blessing. It may be said, that Jesus is not now on the cross, nor in the sepulcher; but that He is risen from the dead, and glorified at the right hand of the majesty on high. This is quite true, but it only magnifies the value of the cross. If

Jesus entered into heaven by His own blood, and now appears there a Lamb as it had been slain, do we not see the honor God has put upon the cross in heaven? It is Jesus risen and glorified that reflects such eternal value on His death. If we would be happy, if we would be heavenly-minded, we must dwell much on the glorious worth and work of the Lamb as it had been slain. The contemplation of the Lord Jesus in the glory, and His finished work, with a believing regard to the testimony of the Holy Ghost in the written word concerning that work, fill the soul with joy and peace; for the word of Christ and the work are both needed for true spiritual joy. We must sit under His shadow, if we would have great delight.

“A bleeding Savior seen by faith,
A sense of pardoning love,
A hope that triumphs over death,
Give joys like those above.”

4. THE BELIEVER'S EXERCISES.

His fruit was *sweet to my taste* {S of S 2:3}.

The tree planted on Calvary is richly laden with sweetest fruit to the believing soul. There is nothing there to sour the spirit; but all is love, and peace, and blessing. All other springs are dry, but here there is continual refreshment. It needs but the hand of faith to pluck and eat the sweet fruit of the tree of life. Looking up to the Lord in the glory, we taste His goodness, and delight our souls in Him. Everything else has more or less of bitterness, but here we find nothing but sweetness. Here we feed on that grace which tells us of pardon, peace, acceptance, righteousness, sonship, and fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Here we see that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings. Here the fountain of living water is ever freely flowing; and we find that all the promises of God are made sure to us; for they are all yea and amen in Christ, unto the glory of God by us. Here the weary obtain renewal of strength, the disordered spirit finds healing, the mourner is comforted, faith becomes increased, and unbelief put to shame; the weak are strengthened, the erring are restored, the poor in spirit are enriched, the hungry are fed, and the thirsty refreshed. Oh, how blessed it is to sit beneath the outstretched arms of the Lamb as it had been slain, and, in the lively exercise of faith, eat of the precious fruit of His agony and death! All our exercises are profitable, if they lead us to Him; all our necessities are good, if they are only the occasions of our realizing our blessings in Christ, and of quickening our appetites to feeding on Him. There is all the difference between seeking satisfaction in the fruit of the Spirit in us, and feeding on Christ for us. The former engenders pride and bondage, the latter keeps us happy and fruitful.

5. THE BELIEVER'S PRIVILEGES.

He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love {S of S 2:4}.

We are made nigh to God in Christ Jesus and by His blood, and our security is in the everlasting, unchangeable love of God. So exceedingly rich is the grace of God, that we cannot have one of the blessings of redemption without having all. So perfect in every

way is the atoning work, that we are called unto the fellowship of the risen and glorified Son of God --

raised up together, and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus {see Eph. 2:6}.

It is done --

He brought me to the banqueting house.

Hence we have liberty to draw near to God, to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. When Christ died on the cross, we are told that the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; thus showing us that every impediment to man's drawing near was removed, and that, through Christ's sacrifice, we may come with boldness to the throne of grace. The returned prodigal not only received the kiss of reconciliation, the best robe, the ring, shoes, &c.; but he was at once invited to feast at the father's table over the fatted calf, as having all the privileges of sonship --

let us eat and be merry {Luke 15:23}.

So the Christian is not only reconciled, justified, and blessed, but is at once brought to the Father's bosom, loved with the same love as the Father hath loved Christ; for Jesus died to bring us to God. He undertook to raise us up at the last day, to present His Church without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. He is our life; He hath quickened us, given us the Spirit of adoption, and His blood gives us a sure title to glory; hence, through Him, we have access by the Spirit unto the Father. We are brought to the banqueting house, and His banner over us is love.

This is the ground of true worship. We no longer know Jerusalem, or any other place, where men ought to worship; for

God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth {John 4:24}.

Where Jesus is, in the heavenlies, is the banqueting house -- the house of bread and wine; the blood of Jesus is the way, the Spirit is the power, a believing and true heart the necessary state, the holiest of all the place. This is worship.

Here it is also that we learn the ways and mind of God. By the teaching of His Spirit, through the written word, our minds become stored with His thoughts, our hearts filled with His love; so that we think as He thinks, hate what He hates, love what He loves; according to our measure walk as Jesus walked, speak His words, &c. This is fellowship; this is the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Here we find the Lamb as it had been slain, ever reminding us of an already accomplished redemption, and of our perfect acceptance in Him. No obedience of ours could effect this; no legal service or carnal ordinances could possibly bring us into such nearness and blessing; but we are brought to the house of bread and wine by the blood of the Lamb. There we feast our souls. There we drink the cup of blessing. There we realize that His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. There the various attributes of the God of love and peace shine forth in the slain Lamb with unfading beauty and eternal brightness. The joy of that banqueting house is that the dead son is alive again, and the lost found; the Shepherd's joy is, that He has found the sheep which was lost; and we rejoice that we are delivered from the swine-

trough of sin and misery, and welcomed to feasting and joy in the Father's house. Happy would it be if we all more fully enjoyed the blessed privileges into which the grace of God has brought us.

Dear reader, have you seen beauty in Jesus? Has the death of Christ a claim on your heart above everything else? Are you seeking wealth, pleasure, science, fame? or are you so convinced of the unsatisfying character of all other things that you seek Jesus for present and eternal rest and peace? Do think of these things. You may perhaps say, I seek money, pleasure, science, fame, and Christ too; but let me tell you, that you cannot have this. You cannot serve God and mammon. You cannot be a friend of the world without being the enemy of God. You cannot love sin and love Christ too. You cannot please yourself and please God also. You cannot be an infidel and a believer at the same time. Let Me beseech you to discontinue the attempt to reconcile such impossibilities; let me entreat you to behold the love of God set forth so fully in the death of His beloved Son. Oh, look at that tree on which Jesus bare our sins in His own body! There tarry till your hard heart is melted, till your icy affections are dissolved, till your unbelieving soul is overcome with such amazing love. Then you will love Jesus, delight in His ways and service, and the sincere language of your heart will be,

As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love {S of S 2:3, 4}.

May God graciously apply His own truth, by His Spirit, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Salvation; Or, the Philippian Jailor

What must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:30, 31).

I desire to address myself especially to the unsaved. Many will read these pages who are not converted. Some know they are unsaved; their daily pursuits show it: they are conscious that they have not yet tasted the joys of redeeming love: others despise and discard the subject altogether. There was a time when every Christian in the world was unconverted; for

we all . . . were by nature children of wrath, even as others {Eph. 2:3}.

What an awful condition it is to be unsaved! and yet how many are careless about it! The jailor at Philippi was unsaved; but when he felt the reality of the state he was in, he cried out for salvation, and found it, to the joy and rejoicing of his heart. One thing is certain, that all who would enjoy the blessings of salvation must have eternal life; for Jesus said,

Ye must be born again {John 3:7}.

This is very plain and decisive.

Many persons are really ignorant of the terrible danger they are in; they see not the precipice on which they stand; they perceive not the brittle thread by which they are suspended; they know not that they live on the very threshold of eternity; they feel not that they are distant from God, rebellious against God, guilty before God; therefore they cannot be anxious about salvation. They may think of outward propriety before men, of religious forms, ordinances, and the like; but they are not concerned about salvation from the wrath to come. The Bible, however, speaks to us of salvation. The grace of God brings salvation. The gospel is a message from God to men about salvation. Jesus Himself preached salvation. He said to a weeping woman at His feet,

Thy faith hath saved thee {Luke 7:50};

and to a repentant publican,

Salvation is come to this house {see Luke 19:9}

Paul exultingly exclaimed,

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth {Rom. 1:16}.

Those who received the gospel in apostolic times felt that they were saved; they realized a present salvation; they regarded themselves and their fellow-believers as saved; hence we are told that

the Lord added to the Church . . . such as should be saved {Acts 2:47}

-- saved ones. Paul addressed the Corinthians, saying

but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified {1 Cor. 6:11};

and that the preaching of the cross

unto us which are saved it is the power of God {1 Cor. 1:18};

and writing to Timothy, he said,

Who hath saved us, &c. {2 Tim. 1:9}.

And so, also, the Old Testament taught; for the Israelite in Egypt, whose lintel and door-posts were sprinkled with the blood of the lamb, was safe. When God's angry judgments were all around, he was perfectly safe, because of the sprinkled blood; he might feast on the roasted lamb, and rejoice, because he was sheltered by the blood. The fleeing man-slayer was saved the moment he entered the city of refuge. The avenger might seek to alarm him, but he was safe, because he was inside the city. Noah was safe as soon as he entered the ark, for God shut him in; though afterwards he was in the midst of destroying vengeance. Rahab the harlot, whose house was on the wall of the city which fell down flat, was safe; for the scarlet line was in the window. All these persons, I say, were safe -- their security was unquestionable. Whatever judgments happened to others, they were taught that they were perfectly safe. They so understood the matter, and the result confirmed it. And so now; God so values the death of the unblemished Victim -- the one perfect offering of His well-beloved Son -- that He pronounces a full, free, present, and eternal salvation to every sinner that believes; perfect safety, come what may, because he has redemption in Christ Jesus and through His blood.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus {Rom. 8:1}.

"Happy Christian, God's own child,
Called, chosen, reconciled:
Once a rebel, far from God,
Now brought nigh through Jesu's blood."

In considering these verses, I shall notice --

1. The jailor's awakening;
2. The gospel preached to him;
3. Its effects.

1. THE AWAKENING. With regard to the Philippian jailor, we know but little of his former history. From the few materials we have, we may gather that he was diligent in his calling, and that he took no more interest in the apostles of the Lord Jesus than in the worshipers of the great goddess Diana. It is very likely that he had heard something of Paul's ways, if he had not of the conversion and baptism of Lydia and others. He knew also why Paul and Silas were imprisoned; and appears not only to have acquiesced in the propriety of punishing and restraining such men, but also of preventing, as far as possible, a recurrence of their preaching. They were brought to the prison, with a charge that the jailor would

keep them safely {Acts 16:23};

but that we might know that they had then no favour in the jailor's eyes, we are told that he

thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks {Acts 16:24}.

This is enough to show us the condition of his heart. He knew not, felt not, God's love; therefore his heart was destitute of that love to the brethren which always marks those who are born of God. He had very probably heard Paul and Silas praying and singing praises unto God at midnight; for we are told that the prisoners heard them. But none of these things seem to have moved the jailor. Like a thorough man of the world, he appears to have retired to bed that night with as much unconcern as on any other occasion. All that he heard and saw of the servants of the Lord Jesus were insufficient to awaken his dark mind, and arouse his conscience. But God had a purpose of blessing in store for him. God's eye was upon him for good. God's good pleasure was to glorify His own name, in making the wrath of man to praise Him, and hiding pride from man. The holy, godly testimony of faithful ministers had not impressed his heart, therefore other means must be used to alarm his benighted soul. That jailor who had so cruelly thrust them into the dungeon, and chained them to the stocks, must yet be brought to fall down before them, and acknowledge them as the servants of the Most High; and Paul and Silas, who appeared to be interrupted in the faithful discharge of their gospel ministry, were also to prove that, like their Master, each step of cruelty and oppression turned out for the furtherance of God's purposes of grace, and only led them forward in the path of true service, and not out of it. Their midnight prayer and praise, too, seem to indicate that they were in the lively attitude of faith, and in full expectation of the blessing of the Lord.

But there is something very solemn in this period of the jailor's history; for it seems to tell us, that if men reject the quiet, holy testimony of the servants of Christ, God has other means of bringing down man's lofty looks. God's power is unlimited, both in mercy and judgment. In this case it was to be made bare in grace. He who smote Saul with blindness, and brought him to the Savior's feet, could also bring the jailor there. That all-powerful arm might justly have been lifted up with the sword of vengeance, and, piercing the heart of that man who had dared to chain the feet of His dear servants, have at once hurled him to the pit of eternal destruction; but mercy rejoiced against judgment. In the darkness and stillness of the night, without any warning whatever, a tremendous convulsion threatened to rase the whole building to the ground, and to bury every inmate in its ruins. We are told that

suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: . . . and every one's bands were loosed {Acts 16:26}.

This was God's way of showing that He is greater than man. This was Mercy's way of bringing salvation to that house, and of honoring the Lord's faithful, suffering servants. This was the very weapon that would arouse the hard and unfeeling jailor. He awoke out of sleep; his conscience owned it as God's dispensation. His first feeling was despair and self-destruction. When he saw the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had all fled, he drew his sword, and would have killed himself. His heart sank, terror

filled his mind; his imagination drew the most hopeless conclusion, and Satan's last effort with him was the foul suggestion, "Kill thyself." A loud voice, however, suddenly altered his judgment, and produced an instantaneous revolution in his mind. Are not all the prisoners gone? No.

Paul cried with a loud voice, Do thyself no harm; for we are all here {Acts 16:28}.

This was the sweet and heavenly way that Paul took with his jailor. It was returning good for evil, and kindness to one who had treated him so cruelly. But more than this. His conscience is awakened, a crowd of solemn thoughts press upon his mind. The convulsion of an earthquake might have consigned him at once to a dark eternity; another shock and he may be called to give an account of himself to God. He is assured that Paul and Silas have that peace and joy to which he is a stranger, and that they are the servants of God. He feels now that he is an unsaved man; that if he die, he must go where hope and mercy never can come. His case is urgent, his danger imminent, his position most perilous; for he now knows that he had been sleeping on the edge of a fearful precipice. Not a moment then can be lost. A light! a light! he cried. His very joints are loose, and every fibre of his body seems to quiver. Salvation, salvation is the longing of his whole soul. He springs at once into the inner prison, and falling down before these servants of the Lord Jesus, cries out,

Sirs, what must I do to be saved? {Acts 16:30}

Here I would pause, and kindly ask the reader, what profit has the sweet voice of God's redeeming love been to you? You read of Jesus in this book; you have often seen His servants, and heard them testify of forgiveness of sins through His blood; but has it aroused you? Will you, by your indifference, compel God to visit you with some painful affliction, some distressing dispensation, before you consider your state before Him? Must He snatch away from your eyes the dearest object of your life? Must He lay you prostrate on a bed of languishing? Must He make the earth to tremble, before you turn to Him for salvation?

It seems to me that these bitter ways are sometimes necessary, to alarm and incline men's hearts to come to Jesus. Oh, my reader! do consider how matters stand between you and God, and turn to Him at once for the salvation of your soul, lest, instead of an earthquake being sent to alarm your conscience and bring you to the Savior, a messenger be dispatched in judgment to hurl you into an eternity of blackness and despair!

2. THE GOSPEL PREACHED. It was salvation that occupied the jailor's whole soul, nothing less than salvation; not religious ceremonies, but salvation. What must I do to be saved? This, too, is the anxious enquiry of every truly enlightened soul; and we need not go to commentators or learned doctors for a correct answer to the question; for the Scriptures plainly tell us. The apostolic reply was,

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved {Acts 16:31}.

This was the gospel that Paul and Silas preached, and it was an echo of their Master's voice; for when He was asked the question,

What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?
 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God,
 that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent {John 6:28, 29}.

The gospel then preached to this awakened sinner of the Gentiles was salvation by faith. The jailor's thought, like many others, was that salvation was by works; what must I *do*? But Paul and Silas assured him that he could be saved only in the way of faith. They presented the Lord Jesus Christ to him as the object of faith, and His finished work, and God's acceptance of it, as the ground of salvation, and warrant for perfect peace --

thou shalt be saved.

This is very simple, and commends itself to the confidence of an anxious enquirer. The gospel really excludes all idea of creature-doing for salvation, because it testifies that Jesus, the Son of God, hath so completely finished the work of our redemption, so thoroughly purged our sins, that He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, the rightful Lord of heaven and earth, and that all who believe on Him have at once an eternal interest in that blessed work. The Lord Jesus having magnified the law by bearing its curse, put away sin, abolished death, burst the bars of the grave, and triumphed over Satan, hell, and the grave, has entered into heaven itself with His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us; the resurrection and glorification of Christ being God's public testimony of His acceptance of the Savior's all-sufficient work. What is then to be done for salvation? Nothing; it is done already, and we have the warrant of God's word to receive and enjoy it by faith --

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved
 {Acts 16:31}.

Faith reads the lessons of redeeming love in the death of the Son of God upon the cross; and those who can say,

We have known and believed the love that God hath to us
 {1 John 4:16}

have peace; they see that God's love has brought salvation to them, even when sinners, in the cross of His Son, and knowing He is now risen from the dead, they approach God with confidence; they know that He declares them saved by grace, through faith. What, I would ask, can exceed this boundless love? What else could have really met us in our low estate? What could so redound to the glory of God? And who so thoroughly reject the gospel, display self-ignorance, and despise the unsearchable riches of Divine love, as those who talk of *doing* for salvation?

Where is boasting?
 said the apostle.

It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law (Rom. 3:27, 28).

Blessed gospel for a sin-convicted, heavy-laden sinner!

3. THE EFFECTS. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and when received into the heart it brings forth fruit. It is God's means of begetting new creatures.

Of His own will,
 says James,

begat He us with the word of truth {James 1:18}.

It also gives liberty and peace --

the truth shall make you free {John 8:32}.

All this we should expect, when a sinner is brought to know that he is saved. Who so grateful, so dutiful, so happy, so free! Some hear the truth of the gospel, and the only apparent effect is, that it hardens them. This was not the case with Lydia, for her heart was opened, that she attended to the word ministered by Paul; and so the jailor, for his whole soul was filled with anxiety; he, therefore, received the truth at once in the love of it, and its effects were most manifest. What could be so sweet to such an one as the story of the Savior's love! With what intense interest the trembling jailor must have listened to those servants of the Lord while declaring to him the way of salvation! and what grateful surprise must have filled his heart at hearing that the way, was so simple, so free, so full of blessing, and so suited to a lost, helpless sinner! It at once engaged his attention, and made him long to hear more about such glorious tidings; and soon all his household were brought together, though at midnight, and were attentive listeners to Paul and Silas, while they further opened up to them the riches of Divine grace. The energetic, determined jailor, who only a few hours before had so rudely thrust them into the inner prison, regardless of their lacerated backs, now sat like a little child as an anxious enquirer at their feet, and gathered others to partake also of the blessings of the gospel --

They spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house {Acts 16:32}.

Among the first effects, then, of the jailor's reception of the gospel of Christ, we may notice his love for the truth, a child-like enquiring mind, and concern for the spiritual welfare of others. The good news of salvation by Christ had been so applied to his conscience by the Holy Spirit, that it came to him as cold water to a thirsty soul, and he was immediately like a dead man raised to life. He was born again of the incorruptible seed of the word, he was a new creation, old things had passed away, and all things were become new; he therefore had an ear to hear, a mind to understand, a heart to receive and love, and desire more and more, the sincere milk of the word, and such a sense of its value, that he wished others to receive the same blessed gospel.

The next thing we may notice among the fruits of faith, is his love to the Lord's servants. He is begotten by the word of truth, and is thoroughly changed in his ways; he has passed from death unto life, therefore he loves the brethren. A few hours before, he saw nothing more in Paul and Silas to call forth affection and sympathy than in the other prisoners; but now he views every thing with new eyes. Having received the word of truth, the gospel of the grace of God, he loves not only Him that begat, but them also that are begotten of Him; hence we are told that

he took Paul and Silas the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; . . . and . . . brought them into his house, he set meat before them {see Acts 16:33, 34}.

This was blessed. This was a fine example of the fruit of the Spirit, and it proved the sincerity of his profession; for it was not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. Love is a vital point. Religious profession, without a loving heart toward Christ and His members, is like a sounding brass or a tinkling

cymbal. The apostle John declares, that whatever any man may profess,

he that loveth not his brother abideth in death {1 John 3:14}.

But in the jailor's case the entrance of God's word had given light; it had given understanding to the simple; it had by the Spirit quickened him when dead in sins. He thus had Divine life; therefore there was Divine love, fruit in season, self-denial for the sake of Christ's servants.

But more than this, he carried out the mind of the Lord --

he was baptized {see Acts 16:33}.

This Paul and Silas had doubtless set before him, and it came with authority to his conscience, because the love of Christ constrained him. His heart was full. His whole soul was influenced with the atoning death of Christ, and the power of His resurrection. He knew that he was saved by the Lord Jesus Christ, that he had redemption in Christ through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace; it was therefore not arduous, but a sweet privilege to attend to an ordinance in which he would realize so personally what it was to be buried with Christ. Faith does not argue; it simply believes and acts on God's word. Nor was the jailor alone in this; the whole congregation, even all his household who had heard the preaching, had no doubt received the gospel too, were happy in the Savior's love, and were also baptized. (See Acts 16:33.) Hence we see that there was not merely a confession of faith; but the obedience of faith; not only an attentive ear to listen to the word of the Lord, but grateful response in doing the will of the Lord.

And yet further. There was not only love and peace now animating the jailor's soul, there was joy also --

He rejoiced, believing in God with all his house {see Acts 16:34}.

This seems to complete the picture. There was now nothing wanting to show forth the true workmanship of the Spirit in this new-born soul. It was indeed bringing forth good fruit. He could clearly see that there was only a short space of time between him and pleasures for evermore, so that he could rejoice in hope of the glory of God. He could look for the Lord's coming with unhesitating confidence, because he believed that all his sins had been atoned for, all his debt had been cancelled; and now being united by the Holy Ghost to Him who is Lord of heaven and earth, and seated in Him in the heavenlies, he could survey the future with a hope and confidence blooming with immortality and glory. We are told that he was

believing in God {Acts 16:34};

how could he then fail to rejoice? for

"Who have such reason to be glad
As those redeemed to God?"

Thus we have traced, in the narrative of the Philippian jailor, the various workings of the Holy Spirit in awakening one dead in trespasses and sins, giving peace through the gospel of Christ, and its blessed power in giving life and salvation, and bringing forth fruit to God. But the thought crosses my mind that perhaps my reader is unconverted, still dead in sins, still seeking ease and

satisfaction apart from God and Christ. Is it so? Is it possible that you are going on to eternal ruin without desiring salvation, without once anxiously crying out,

What must I do to be saved? {Acts 16:30}.

Is it true that you hear of salvation by Christ, and heed it not? that you know there is a fountain open for sin and all uncleanness in the Savior's blood, and wash not? that the glorious sound,

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved
{Acts 16:31},

rings in your ears, and you put it far from you? Oh, my friend! beware, lest the Savior have to say to you as to them of old,

Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life {John 5:40};

and

How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! {Matt. 23:37}.

DEAR READER! ponder the Lord's awful words, YE WOULD NOT!

"Ye sinners, seek His grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of His cross,
And find SALVATION there."

Iniquity Taken Away, and Sin Purged

Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips: and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me (Isa. 6:5-8).

It is very blessed to trace, in the Old Testament Scriptures, the gracious way in which God has ever been ready to meet man as a sinner, and to contemplate that way which has always been through the sacrificial work of His beloved Son. When our first parents had garments presented to them to cover their nakedness, they were formed of coats of skins, to show us that blessing could only flow from God to man through sacrifice. When Abel obtained witness that he was righteous, it was because of the excellency of the sacrifice which he offered. The whole ritual of the last dispensation teaches us that God can only be approached by man through the sacrifice of a life. Hence it is that there is so much in the ancient Scriptures about dealing with God through the death of the sacrifice; all intended to show forth that in due time God would provide an all-sufficient sacrifice for man as a sinner. But it is here that people so mistake; and Christ crucified is to many still a stumbling-stone and rock of offence. Man's thought in general, if he think of God at all, is about his sacrificing for God; thus vainly hoping to appease God, and procure rest for his conscience by some works of self-denial; but God meets such a false thought at once by saying,

I will have mercy, and not sacrifice {Matt. 9:13, 12:7}.

This entails the most perfect self-sacrifice, because it lays on man the absolute necessity of setting self aside entirely, to confess the utter unworthiness of all self-righteousness, as well as of self altogether, and to rest only in Divine mercy, and on that sacrifice which God has so graciously provided. This has always been the teaching of God; and the same prophet, whose experience in the Lord's presence we are about to contemplate, afterwards published the solemn declaration, that

all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever {Isa. 40:6-8}.

Thus we find that the Spirit of God in olden time taught men that they were sinners, and that their most goodly things were perishing and passing away; and gave them the unalterable word of the Lord, as an immoveable rock for their souls to stay upon. And so it is now.

The chapter before us begins very abruptly. It tells us that the prophet had this vision of glory

in the year that king Uzziah died {Isa. 6:1}.

But why is Uzziah thus introduced? May it not be, among other things, to remind us that the very best man on earth, the highest potentate of Judah's kingdom, the most honored man in the world, stands in widest contrast with THE KING, THE LORD OF HOSTS?

King Uzziah was a leper, and dwelt outside the camp; which shows us that sinful man, however high in office and dignity, is unfit for the presence of God; that man has no resources at all for cleansing the leprosy of sin, and that except God undertake to meet him with healing mercy, he must still remain unclean, and unfit for association with the God of holiness. Hence, on referring to the king's history, as recorded in 2 Chron. 26:21, we are told, that

Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord.

Thus we find, on the very threshold of our subject, the humbling intimation of man's real character of uncleanness and distance from God, though he stand in the highest position of society, and hold the most exalted office, and that even among the most highly favoured people on earth.

In considering this very instructive portion of the Holy Scripture, we shall notice:

1. The prophet's vision of glory.
2. The effect of it upon himself.
3. The assurance of forgiveness he obtained.
4. His willing obedience.

1. THE PROPHET'S VISION OF GLORY.

I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple {Isa. 6:1}.

There, in spirit, before God, the prophet took his place. There he saw the seraphims, the servants of the most High God, His ministers that do His pleasure. He beheld them taking the place of *profoundest reverence*, covering their faces with two of their wings. He saw also that each of them covered his feet, to show that, while they had always walked obediently, they did not glory in their service, but with *greatest humility* gloried only in the Lord. He saw them also with outstretched wings, to signify *their delight in doing God's will*, and that they held themselves in readiness to fly swiftly at His bidding. He heard also the *words uttered* before the throne; he listened to the converse of creatures there, and found it was

Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts {Isa. 6:3};

and

at the voice of him that cried, the posts of the door moved, and the house was filled with smoke {see Isa. 6:4}.

These things the prophet saw and heard. It was indeed an infinitely holy place. No unclean word was heard there; nothing impure escaped the lips of any; no irreverent action was seen; no presumptuous ways, no angry passions, no foolish actions, no

indolent habits, no self-willed manners, were beheld there; for God is holy, and nothing unclean can abide His presence. The prophet was in the light, for God is light. He was beside the balance of the sanctuary, and all was love, and holiness, and truth.

2. THE EFFECT OF THE VISION. Deeply serious and personal reflections occupied the prophet's mind. Man never rightly learns what he is, except in God's presence. It is a well-known fact among men, that if we would understand the true qualities of anything, we must bring it to the light. So it is as regards things spiritual. We may compare ourselves with our fellow-men, and arrive at most erroneous conclusions; thus, the temperate man, measuring himself with a drunkard, believes himself righteous; and the chaste flatter themselves with thoughts of superiority over the licentious; while all may be equally guilty of covetousness, and other uncleanness, in the sight of God. It is therefore not wise to compare ourselves with our neighbours, but, coming into the light of God's holy presence, we shall be truly made manifest. When Isaiah considered the peace, love, humility, holiness, purity, and truth that characterized all those who dwelt in Jehovah's glorious presence, what could the prophet's reflections be? How could he fail to ask himself such questions as, "Am I truly humble before God? Do I serve Him with reverence? Do I delight to do the will of God? Has my conversation been holiness to the Lord?" Surely the prophet felt the light of God's presence to be a heart-searching region! It was enough to show him that he was "unclean! unclean!" that he had come short of God's standard. It was enough to make him feel that he stood "justly condemned" before God, and righteously exposed to His judgment and wrath. Hence he cried out,

Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips {Isa. 6:5}.

Now notice here, dear friends, that the prophet's intense distress was concerning himself:

Woe is ME! for I am undone; because I am unclean, &c.

He did not say, Woe are *we*! *we* are undone. No; true Christianity is a personal thing --

The heart knoweth his own bitterness {Prov. 14:10}.

Many a sentimental professor in our day may be found ready to say, We are all sinners; we are not what we should be. Such talk about *our* Savior, *our* religion, *our* society, &c., thus casting themselves in with others in a lump. But this will not do for God. This is not as the Spirit teaches. He convinces each one of his own sin. He so makes the conscience sensible of its guilt as to cause it to cry out, What must *I* do to be saved?

God be merciful to ME a sinner {Luke 18:13}.

If *I* may but touch His garment, *I* shall be whole {Matt. 9:21}.

Woe is ME! for *I* am undone.

But more than this, he felt he was unclean before God -- a man of unclean lips. Those lips which ought to be, like the seraphim's, consecrated to His praises, had given utterance to the unclean thoughts and feelings of the heart; for

out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh {Matt. 12:34}.

Like another Job, he could say,

I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor MYSELF, and repent in dust and ashes {Job 42:5, 6}.

The light of God's holy presence made his uncleanness manifest; he felt its depths so great, its blackness so foul, its wounds so incurable, that he condemned himself as undone -- hopelessly and helplessly unclean before God; ungodly, unholy, without strength, without any hope of recovery in himself. Having thus learnt himself in God's presence, he was then able to discern that the people by whom he was surrounded were unclean also.

Such were the lessons that the prophet was effectually taught in God's presence. And so, in measure, all learn now who are under Divine teaching; for though we may not be favoured with such a vision of glory as the prophet had, yet the Holy Spirit makes us feel that we have to do with God, and that every creature is manifest in His sight. Moreover, when we now think of the presence of God, we see by faith the risen, ascended, and glorified Man, Christ Jesus. We see there, besides the holy seraphims, one who was a Man of Sorrows in this world of sin, one who was exposed to Satan's temptations, man's deceivings, and the world's unholiness; but He always did the will of Him that sent Him, and finished His work; yea, He delighted in it, however much suffering it entailed. He never uttered an unclean word, or cherished an unholy thought, but from first to last yielded an unblemished life of holy obedience, sealing it with His own blood. When our thoughts thus center around Him, a Lamb as it had been slain, now in the midst of the throne of heaven, we are bound to exclaim, that

all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way {Isa. 53:6}!

and that all our best works are unclean before God. How is it that people are not sensible of their guilt? Because they do not fear God; they do not consider what they are in God's sight; they do not come into His holy presence, and weigh in the balance of truth. When men begin to fear God, they consider that it is to Him they are responsible, as His creatures; that to Him they must give account; that He is the Judge of all; and that the holiness of heaven is the only true standard. Then they feel that they are sinners, rebels, unworthy, and have justly merited banishment from His glorious presence. Then they are awakened to their real danger; they become deeply anxious about their eternal state; and feeling despair in self, they come to the throne of God, exclaiming,

Woe is me! for I am undone.

In this way only are we taught by the Spirit that we are lost and undone. Men may know that they are sinners by comparing themselves with others: thus the thief knows that he is a sinner, because he is surrounded by many who are honest; the unjust knows that he is a sinner, because he is acquainted with some who are upright, &c. In this way only can we account for so many persons who evince no soul-distress being so ready to say, "I know I am a sinner." But when we are brought to think of ourselves *as in God's holy presence*, then, whatever have been our

previous conceptions of our fancied goodness, we are made to feel guilty before God, and exposed to His coming judgment and wrath. Then, I say, our cry is,

Woe is me! for I am undone.

3. Now let us consider THE ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS THE PROPHET OBTAINED. God in Christ is a blessed refuge for a sin-troubled soul; for He will be merciful to our unrighteousness, as was beautifully expressed by Elihu to Job:

God looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light {see Job 33:27, 28}.

He will say,

Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom {Job 33:24}!

This seems to be the rule of the throne of grace, and was just what the prophet experienced; for while he stood thus consciously before the King, the Lord of Hosts, in a repentant mind, confessing his uncleanness, groaning over his sin, condemning himself, acknowledging his undone state, we are immediately told,

Then (mark, *then!*) flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged {Isa. 6:6, 7}.

This is very blessed. It shows us that God waiteth to be gracious. It is a striking instance of the mercy of God to sinful man, and manifests His readiness to pardon and accept those who take a right place before Him. The prophet had an unmistakable warrant for the fullest assurance of his sins being put away, and of standing in the favour and blessing of God.

This assurance was based on two things -- the application of the live coal from off the altar, and the word of the Lord. By the altar we are to understand a place where the sacrifice was burnt and presented to God. The cross of Christ is the only altar of New Testament days, and the various altars of the Old Testament were only types of it; and the coals of fire which consumed the sacrifices, and caused their savour to ascend to God, were figurative of that condemnation of sin which fell on Jesus, when He was made sin and a curse for us upon the cross of Calvary. The application, therefore, of the

live coal {Isa. 6:6}

to the prophet's

unclean lips {Isa. 6:7}

teaches us that God has, in His grace, provided an all-cleansing remedy for sin; that that remedy is found only in the sufferings, blood-shedding, and death of the Son of God; and that the moment the sin-burdened conscience realizes the virtue of that blood, the soul is at once at peace with God. It is the blood of Christ which maketh atonement. It is the blood of Christ which has made peace between the sinner and God. It is

in Christ Jesus {Eph. 2:13}

and

through His blood {Eph. 1:7}

that the far-off sinner is brought nigh to God. It is the blood of Christ alone which cleanseth from all sin. It is only by the blood of Christ that any person has peace and confidence in God's presence.

The prophet knew that his uncleanness was purged by the application of the live coal from off the altar; and the sinner that believes in Christ Jesus for salvation knows also that he has peace through the blood of the cross. But the prophet had also the word of the Lord to assure him of his pardon and acceptance; and, blessed be God, so have we. Some will try to persuade us that no one can know his sins forgiven till after death, and therefore it is great presumption for any one to say so. But I reply, Who says I am forgiven? God says so; and if God says,

Thy sins are forgiven thee {Luke 5:20},

why need I fear, even if the whole world says it is not so? He tells us that Christ hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and that my sins are forgiven, if I believe on the Lord Jesus; for

to Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins {Acts 10:43}.

Let God then be true; for He who said to the prophet,

Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged {Isa. 6:7},

says also now to me, and to all that believe on the Lord Jesus,

Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee {Matt. 9:2}.

We wait not for dreams, or visions, or some miraculous actings upon the senses; but we rest on the precious blood of Christ, and are assured by the unalterable word of the Lord that our sins are forgiven.

"Oh, how sweet to see the flowing
Of His soul-redeeming blood!
With Divine assurance knowing
That it made my peace with God."

But there are some who, though they do not deny the present knowledge of forgiveness of sins, yet often hesitate to confess that they are saved. They forget that the object of Christ's incarnation and death was to SAVE, that He came to SAVE the lost -- not to help, but to save -- every one that believeth on Him. Hence He told the weeping woman at His feet,

Thy faith hath SAVED thee {Luke 7:50}!

And when Zacchæus received Him joyfully, Jesus said,

This day is SALVATION come to this house {Luke 19:9}.

The work of Christ saves, and the word of Christ says, You are saved by faith!

"But shall I after all be in glory?" exclaim some of the uninstructed and feeble-minded of the household of faith. "Though I now rest in Christ, and am at peace with God, may I not after all be lost?" No, no, dear child of God; for the blood of Christ that speaks before the throne on my behalf now, will speak there for thee for ever; and Christ, who is thy righteousness now, will be thy righteousness for ever; and the Holy Spirit, who dwells in thee now, though grieved and quenched, will dwell in thee for ever;

and Christ, who pleads for thee in heaven now, will continually intercede for thee. Jesus hath thee securely, and will never let thee go: none shall pluck thee out of His hand; for thus saith the word of the Lord,

He is able to save them to the uttermost (i.e. right on to the end) that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them {Heb. 7:25}.

“The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength shall complete;
His promise is Yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet.
Things future, nor things that are now,
Nor all things below nor above,
Can make Him His purpose forego,
Or sever our souls from His love.”

4. HIS WILLING OBEDIENCE. Some may say, You should preach Christian duty. So say I, only put it in its right place. Jesus said,

If ye love me, keep my commandments {John 14:15};

for He loves the

willing heart {Ex. 35:5},

and the

cheerful giver {2 Cor. 9:7}.

When we know peace with God, through the amazing sacrifice of His beloved Son, it constrains us to love and serve Him to whom we owe so much. And we see the prophet was much in this spirit; for after he had received an unmistakable assurance of pardon and peace with God, he had a willing, grateful desire to addict himself to the Lord's service. He says,

I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me {Isa. 6:8}.

This surely is willing service, happy duty; it is like taking the yoke of Jesus, whose yoke is easy, and whose burden is light. The wondrous love of Christ constrains us to love Him, who has so loved us; it calls upon us to praise and glorify Him, who has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Dear reader! let me affectionately ask if you have solemnly considered how matters stand between you and God? Does He now behold you as at peace with Him? Are you sure that God says of you, as He did of the prophet,

Thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin is purged {Isa. 6:7}?

This is the ground of peace with God -- peace through the blood of Jesus -- peace in the confidence that your sins were transferred to Jesus, and borne by Him, and that you are made the righteousness of God in Him.

Oh, my reader, if you feel the burden of your sins, and have not peace, come to Jesus at once, just as you are!

“Come, ye weary, heavy laden,
Lost and ruined in the fall!
If you tarry till you're better,
You will never come at all:
Not the righteous,
SINNERS Jesus came to call!”

Strange Fire and the Fire From Heaven; Or, Man's Thoughts and God's Thoughts of Christ

2 Chron. 7:1-10

Human thoughts concerning Christ and His sacrificial work are at the best poor. Man can think of the crucifixion as an historical fact, and write and speak of the nails that pierced His hands and feet, of the thorny crown, and other *external* circumstances connected with His death; and come to his own conclusion too as to the worth of that sacrifice. In fact, the gigantic Christendom round about us is built up mainly on *man's* miserable thoughts of Christ, and of things concerning Him. Like Nadab and Abihu, they have mingled strange fire with the incense which God commanded them not; and, like them, judgment and death must be the result. We are told that

they died before the Lord (Lev. 10:1-3);

and so must all those who are bringing the name of Christ and His work into use simply for present advantage and human exaltation; thus making ordinances and religious things their refuge, or relying upon the false foundation of associating man's opinions and his actions with the name of Christ, instead of relying only on Christ Himself and His infinitely efficacious work. Such is

strange fire (Lev. 10:1);

it is not according to God's mind; it does not give Him the glory. It is man's religiousness; and the end of these things is death.

It was not so, however, in Solomon's day, when he dedicated the house of the Lord. (See 2 Chron. 7:1-10.) We do not find

strange fire

offered; but

the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices {2 Chron. 7:1}.

We see God here, and His acting in relation to the sacrifice. This is what the faith of a Spirit-taught, sin-convicted soul specially beholds in the cross of Christ. They are not ignorant of the external facts of the crucifixion; but until they see God acting in the scene, until they there see God dealing with His own Son as the sin-bearer, they find no real ground of peace and rest. In the cross of Christ faith sees the invisible God searching the victim, trying and estimating its worth by the fire of His uncompromising holiness, and condemning sin in the flesh. The cross of Calvary tells us of an unblemished One, who was in Himself infinitely acceptable to God, who fully glorified God in regard to our sins, and put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. It is God's estimate of the death of Christ, and nothing short of it, that establishes our souls in peace before Him. The resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Christ show us the infinite acceptability, the savour of rest, of that offering in the sight of God, and all combine to tell us that our security is built upon Divine righteousness and truth.

If, then, we would have the joy of this immovable security before God, we must have God's thoughts of

Jesus Christ, and Him crucified {1 Cor. 2:2};

for God has so estimated the priceless value of that finished work on the cross as to raise Him up from the dead, and give us life, righteousness, and completeness in Him. God, we know, has counted that blessed One, who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, worthy of the highest possible exaltation. It is God who tells us that we are

now justified by His blood {Rom. 5:9},

and who gives us fullest liberty to come into the holiest of all.

Just, then, as we are seeing God's dealing with Jesus His own Son upon the tree, and learning His mind from His word and by His Spirit -- His estimate of the infinite perfections of that one offering which was once offered -- will our hearts be set at liberty, and established in unquestionable security before God. God hath reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ.

Next observe, that the sacrifices having been consumed with fire from heaven, glory followed. We are told that

the glory of the Lord filled the house {2 Chron. 7:1}.

And does not this teach us what a sure title to glory the blood of the cross is? There is a most blessed connection between

the sacrifice

and

the glory.

Let us well consider this. The death of Christ, like a mighty lever, gives the one who believes title to the very glory of God. Like the rent vail, it removes every obstacle to going at once into God's presence. Glory must follow. We are at this moment between the cross and the glory, with liberty to enter into the holiest by faith. On no other ground whatever could we enter into the cloudless, holy presence of God, but that

Christ died for our sins {1 Cor. 15:3},

according to the Scriptures, and that He

was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father {Rom. 6:4}.

We are therefore told, that

the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the house (2 Chron. 7:1)

No wonder, then, that we so often sing --

"O Lord, we adore Thee,
For Thou hast redeemed us;
Our title to glory
We read in Thy blood."

Is it not most blessed to see this connection between the sacrifice and the glory? How clearly it shows us that we owe all our blessings to the blood of Christ, and that in the glory itself we shall be so deeply conscious of it, as to be for ever rejoicing in the infinite value of that blood, and giving unceasing glory to God and the Lamb.

Nothing so really humbles us as the sense of what God has wrought for us in Christ. It leaves no room for self-exaltation. It is a completed work. We are

made the righteousness of God in Him {2 Cor. 5:21}.

This bows the heart before God to praise and give thanks. We are therefore told, that

when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, *they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever* (2 Chron. 7:3).

It is, then, being in communion with God's mind as to the glories of Christ, and the unsearchable value of His work on the cross, that the heart is really emptied of self and earth, and filled with praise and gratitude, to God. We are taken up with God, and delight to tell God what He is. This is worship.

Devotedness too will be connected with it; for the affections and desires of the heart are stirred by such wondrous mercy; and purposes of soul are formed according to the will of God. Hence this inspired narrative next tells us, that

THEN,

yes,

then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the Lord (2 Chron. 7:4).

How is it that in the present day many Christians feel it so difficult to yield themselves and their substance to the Lord? The answer is plain. It is because Christ is so little understood, -- God's estimate of Him so feebly apprehended -- His perfections not known. Our ignorance of Christ is great, and very culpable. When God's revelation of the glories of His beloved Son is really known, and the infinite acceptability of His work received; when the blessed reality of being in Christ is laid hold of, our nearness to God in Him apprehended, the all-satisfying portion He is, and His all-sufficiency for us under all circumstances *known*; then the affections of our hearts are roused, and our energies so drawn forth, that we cry out --

“Love so amazing, so Divine,
Demands my *soul*, my *life*, my *ALL*.”

We are further told, that the people were

glad and merry in heart.

And why? Because of

the goodness that the Lord had shewed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel His people (2 Chron. 7:10).

I ask, then, in conclusion, can we fail to learn from these lessons that our present happiness, devotedness, and worship, all owe their source to God, as He has revealed Himself in Christ? Learning

God's estimate of Christ in His presence, and what He is to us and has done for us, we cannot but be moved to readiness of heart and purpose to associate ourselves with Him in a world that still rejects Him, and most truly feel that His interests are our interests, His joy our joy, and that what grieves and dishonors Him also grieves and dishonors us.

We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement (reconciliation) (Rom. 5:11).

Conversion; Or, Paul's Preaching At Thessalonica, and its Effects

Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:9, 10).

The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation. The same power which raised Christ from the dead brings sinners to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. It gives spiritual life to the dead, imparts peace to the tormented conscience, delivers from the love of sin and unholy associations, and makes the soul happy and at rest in the presence of God. Thus a vast change is produced. You may, perhaps, have seen a drowning man just taken out of the water in a state of senselessness and inanimation. The anxious bystanders feel for the pulse in vain; they place their ears to the mouth, and watch and listen with breathless silence for that bosom once more to heave a sigh; they move the eyelids, but all sense of light seems extinguished; they call aloud, yet not a single feature moves in response. But powerful remedies are used, and in a little while the apparently lifeless form moves, the features beam with happy intelligence, and fully manifest every faculty of vigour and animation. How great the change! How powerful the remedies! What a vast alteration in the person! Yet this is but a feeble illustration of the power of the gospel of God in those who pass from death unto life.

Those who preach should look for decided effects, and those who hear would do well to consider whether the gospel has wrought a mighty change in them. Why has it not? Because they have not believed. They have heard that Christ shed His blood for the remission of sins, but they have not believed on Him; for the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that *believeth*. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; but it is not hearing about Christ only, but believing on Christ, that is the way of salvation; not merely knowing, as some say, the plan of salvation, but coming to Christ to be saved, that makes the power of the blessed gospel to be experienced in the soul.

After Christ had offered Himself as a sacrifice for sins on the cross, and rose from the dead, He sent forth the gospel, or word of reconciliation, to a guilty world by His servants. Among others, He specially raised up Paul, and sent him a great many places to proclaim the gospel of Divine mercy to sinners. In due time he was directed to a large city, called Thessalonica. Here the gospel was an entirely new thing. The inhabitants were for the most part idolaters, though there were many Jews there also. The Jews thought themselves the objects of God's peculiar favour, because their ancestors had been so; they prided themselves on the round of duties connected with their synagogue service, and looked with pity on their ignorant neighbours, who so perseveringly persisted in falling down and worshipping an image that their own hands had fashioned. But Paul well knew that both classes were alike guilty before God, and that none could stand in blessing except on the ground of the atoning blood of Christ. Yet he remembered that the

Jews once stood in covenant relationship to God, and that the Lord Jesus, after His resurrection, commanded His apostles to preach first at Jerusalem. Accordingly he went into the synagogue of the Jews every Sabbath-day, and reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, proving from their own prophets that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and preached the blessed gospel of present and eternal salvation to all who believe in Christ. Paul also preached the same gospel to the Gentile idolaters; for he knew that Jews and Gentiles were both alike under sin, whatever their birth, education, or privileges had been, and that God had met them alike in the cross of Christ; and in this way could bring both into present and eternal blessing. It is well to notice that Paul did not go into this dark city with religious forms, ceremonies, or sacraments; he did not propose to them self-improvement, education, plans for moralizing the profane, and the like. No, he struck at the root at once; he planted the cross of Christ before their minds; he proved to them that they needed salvation, that they were far from God, perishing in their sins, and declared that Jesus Christ the Son of God had died on the cross for sinners, and rose again because He had for ever put away sin; and that God now preached that finished work to them, as that which could give them present and eternal deliverance from the wrath to come. Thus he preached Christ, salvation by Christ alone, present and eternal blessing by the death and resurrection of Christ the Son of God. The idolater, who had been groping in darkness among idols of wood and stone, and the Jew, who was cleaving to formal ordinances and traditions of men, alike manifested that they were under sin, and guilty before God; and the gospel of the grace of God met them both. God in mercy spoke to them of redeeming love; and the gospel of the living and true God still comes close to the ears of Pharisees and publicans, the chaste and defiled, the Jew and Gentile, with words of mercy and peace by the death of His Son.

Oh, the wonder of wonders, that the thrice holy God should come down to sinners of every race and class with words of reconciliation, a message of pardon and peace, through the death and resurrection of His only-begotten Son! This is Divine love; this levels men, with all their boastful pretensions, to the dust; this shows God's judgment of man, whether Jew or Gentile; this reveals the fact that God is a sin-pardoning as well as a sin-hating God, giving remission of sins to every lost sinner that believes. Paul's preaching, then, was the cross. Wherever he went, he set forth Christ crucified and risen, because this alone can deliver from the wrath to come, this alone is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. But though he said,

We preach Christ crucified {1 Cor. 1:23},

we know he sometimes entered also into the coming glory of Christ, as well as of His past humiliation and suffering, as we find he did at Thessalonica. He preached to them about

another King, one Jesus {Acts 17:7}.

This magnifies the glory of the cross. The fact that Christ is soon coming to receive His people unto Himself, that God is yet going to set up His blessed Son as King over all the earth, and put everything in subjection under His feet, bring every knee to bow, and every tongue to confess to Him, reflects greatly on the value of His cross, and shows God's estimate of His finished work, however men despise and reject it. Thus we see that Paul went into this heathen city with the glorious gospel of the grace of God (Acts 17). Now let us consider its effects.

THE EFFECTS of Paul's preaching at Thessalonica were twofold; some persecuted and blasphemed, others believed and found salvation. So great was the enmity brought out by the preaching of the death, resurrection, and coming of Christ, that Paul and Silas had to escape for their lives.

The carnal mind is enmity against God {Rom. 8:7};

it therefore cannot bear to hear of God's love in Christ. Such esteem the gospel to be foolishness, calculated to interfere with the world's ease and progress, and check man's lofty pretensions. Thus his wicked passions are stirred up, and his hatred to God and His truth manifested, in persecuting and oppressing His servants. Yet, with all this, the gospel was to many the power of God unto salvation. The Holy Spirit wrought effectually in many hearts by the truth; so that we read that

some of the Jews believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few {see Acts 17:4}.

These constituted the Church of God at Thessalonica, to whom the epistles were afterwards addressed; and a beautiful sample it is of the Church of the living God, which is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, called out by the preaching of the gospel, and baptized by one Spirit into one body. Made in Christ, of twain, one new man; having resurrection-life, indwelt, and united to Christ, by the Holy Ghost, and members of His body, His flesh and bones, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, but Christ is all and in all. (See Eph.2:13-17.)

Thus the gospel prospered in this city. The glory of God in the person and work of Christ shone with such brilliancy into many hearts, as to cause Jewish tradition and formality, as well as Gentile heathenism and idolatry, to be alike laid low at the Savior's feet, and both ceased to glory in the flesh, and were enabled to glory in the Lord. The cross not only reconciled each to God, but also reconciled Jew and Gentile to each other, and brought both into the place of worship and thanksgiving before God. Each found Christ to be a suitable Savior, worthy of their heart's confidence, an object for endless contemplation and praise, and a hope full of brightness and immortality. Thus the gospel came unto them, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, so that the results were most decided and manifest; for Paul says,

Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come {1 Thess. 1:9, 10}.

Now let us look at the results a little more attentively.

1. THEY TURNED TO GOD FROM IDOLS. God drew them to Himself with cords of love. They had heard and believed that God is love. They saw in the death and triumphs of Christ unparalleled love, unsearchable wisdom, and almighty power; and they felt the boundless grace of God in presenting that salvation to them. They found the living God through Christ an object of attraction instead of dread; for they heard the sweet voice of redeeming love instead of condemnation and judgment. They knew that they were exposed to the wrath to come, and justly deserved eternal condemnation; but they saw God meeting them with mercy and peace in the wounds and death of His own most blessed Son. This amazing kindness of God melted their hearts, changed their minds, drew them heavenward, constrained them to turn to God, to confide in God, and to rest in the Father of mercies and God of all comfort. Not a god of their own fashioning, but the living God, the self-existing I AM, the First and the Last, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the only wise God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. They thus experienced a great change, a turning from carnal objects to the Savior-God. This is conversion. It was the turning-point in their history. They were turned from darkness to light; from the power of Satan to God; to the living and true God, from dumb idols. Thus they rejoiced in knowing salvation by Christ. Their confidence was in the living and true God, who cannot deny Himself, and whose word will never pass away. Thus they were at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ was all and in all; Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ glorified, Christ interceding for them, Christ coming; for through Him they had found present justification, and eternal deliverance from the wrath to come. They had turned to God, and found all they could desire in Him. How, then, could idols be anything to them now? Before the deep reality of the cross of Christ, the folly and worthlessness of idols were made manifest; it was easy, therefore, to give them their proper estimate as dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. One believing view of Immanuel's love in His blood-shedding and death is enough to expose the world's folly, and the emptiness of its religiousness, and to allure the heart to the bosom of the Father, who so freely sent His Son to deliver us from the wrath to come.

Dear reader! has the gospel produced this great effect in you? Has the story of the Savior's tears, groans, agonies, blood-shedding, and death, melted your heart, and turned you to the bosom of the God of peace? Have you known such a turning-point in your history? Can you look back on the time when you had hard thoughts of God, dreaded appearing before Him, and wished you had never been born; but that the gospel reached you, faith came by hearing, you believed the love of God, and through the atoning death of His Son found peace with God? This is the way the Holy Spirit leads, this has been the experience of millions; and multitudes still delight to say --

"O happy day! when first we felt
Our hearts with true contrition melt,
And saw our sins of crimson guilt
All cleansed by blood on Calvary spilt.

"O happy day! when first Thy love
Began our grateful hearts to move;
And, gazing on Thy wondrous cross,
We saw all else as worthless dross."

2. THEIR SERVICE to God was another effect of the gospel; they turned to God from idols to *serve* the living and true God {1 Thess. 1:9}.

The love of God constrained them to serve Him; for, according to the Savior's words,

to whom much is forgiven the same loveth much {see Luke 7:47}.

They loved God because He had first loved them. A feeling of gratitude for such unfathomable mercy made His service unspeakably happy. The knowledge of the Savior's kindness made His yoke easy, and His burden light. A sense of deliverance from the wrath to come, through the death and resurrection of Christ, is the main-spring of true service. This service is happy liberty -- perfect freedom; it is the way of faith which works by love. How many mistake here. They serve in order to be saved, instead of because they have received forgiveness of sins and eternal life; and the mistake is fatal. To expect salvation in any measure by works of the flesh is a fearful delusion; to work in obedience to God, because of being pardoned and accepted in Christ, is the blessed path of the Spirit. The Savior's words are,

If ye love me, keep my commandments {John 14:15},

and

love one another; as I have loved you, &c. {John 13:34}

It is of the utmost importance to be clear on this point. It is plain that the Thessalonian converts were on right ground; for Paul addressed them as those who were (not would be, but already) delivered from the wrath to come. They knew that they served the living God. Long had they served dumb idols; but now they obeyed the living God. Persons do not believe that "God is," that His eye beholds them, His ear is open to their cry, His face set against evil-doers, that His heart loves, His arm brought salvation, and that His hand is open to satisfy the desire of every living thing. People do not think this; they do not believe that He is the living God. The language of many a heart is, "No God"; hence it is that the creature is so often set up and worshipped more than the Creator, and that so many live without God and without hope in the world, so that God is not in all their thoughts. Not so, however, were these Thessalonians; their faith and hope were in the living God, and they served Him, sought to please Him, obey Him, honor and glorify Him, who had redeemed them with nothing less than the precious blood of His own Son. They also knew Him as the true God. This was happier still. They knew He had always been true to His word, and that He would be true to His promises, true in hearing and answering prayer, true to all who put their trust in Him, true to accept their service, true to

sustain them in time of trial, true to bring them through every difficulty, and true to present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Oh, if people believed that God was true, how would sinners fly to Jesus to escape the wrath to come! and how quiet would believers be in time of trouble, how submissive in affliction, patient in waiting upon God, and cheerful in the darkest dispensations! The true God has given us His own word to guide us and hope in, until wilderness experiences are past, and we shall be able, when in the glory, to look back and declare that not one jot or tittle has failed. Thus we see that the Thessalonian believers were a working people; they served the living and true God, and were well known for their works of faith and labours of love. We may be assured that turning to God through Jesus must ever be connected with loving service.

3. THEIR POSTURE OF SOUL, is also set before us as another effect of the gospel.

Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven {1 Thess. 1:9}.

This is very blessed. God looks, not only for the ready hand and willing foot, but He also looks for the patient hope -- the mind and heart to be inclined in the right direction. All Christians, on realizing pardon and acceptance in Christ, find it in their hearts, more or less, to serve the living and true God; but comparatively few, in the present day, see that it is their happy privilege to wait for His Son from heaven. Many will tell us that they wait for the world to be converted by the preaching of the gospel; but the Scriptures certainly do not teach this. Others say that they look for great changes in the nations, and especially among the scattered Jews; but the Thessalonian believers were taught by the Holy Ghost to wait for Christ. There has been much darkness as to the hope of the Church, even among true Christians; and, where the doctrine has been scripturally taught, it has not been received by many, because of their not seeing the certainty of their salvation, their own security in a risen and exalted Savior. Not able to rejoice in being already delivered from the wrath to come, how could they love the sound of the Savior's second coming? How can those who have not peace with God wait for His Son from heaven? True hope of glory must be connected with assurance of salvation. The Thessalonian believers knew, through the gospel Paul preached, that they were delivered from the coming wrath. They had no doubt of their eternal salvation by Christ; they could therefore happily wait for the return of the Son of God from heaven. Instead of considering Christ's coming with fear and dread, they anticipated it with joy and gladness. They did not wait for the world's conversion, nor for the reconstruction of the Roman Empire, nor for the restoration of the Jews to their own land, nor for any other earthly event; but, as saved ones, they served the God of love and peace, and waited for His Son from heaven. Christ Himself was their hope, as well as their confidence. The apostle afterwards taught them that the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and that all in Christ, whether dead or alive, will be caught up to meet Him in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord. They waited for God's Son from heaven. They knew of no happiness, no heaven, no glory, apart from the person of Christ

the Son of God. They were in love with Christ. He was all their desire, as well as all their salvation. The Savior's promise,

I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also {John 14:3},

was very precious to their souls. They therefore hoped for Christ -- to see Him, be with Him, like Him. They might possibly die before Jesus came; but it was not death they looked for, but Christ -- to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. This is the true and blessed hope, the comforting, sanctifying, soul-reviving hope of the gospel, and this was their posture of soul; their energies flowed outward in faith and love in the service of God, and upward in blessed expectation of His Son from heaven. Faith, hope, and love were thus kept in lively exercise, the true and blessed effects of the glorious gospel they had received.

And the believer is still called to wait for God's Son from heaven. Many centuries have passed since these dear Thessalonian believers thus honored the Lord Jesus, and He has not yet come; but He will come, according to promise. Yes,

He that shall come will come, and will not tarry {Heb. 10:37}.

For this, too, not a few are waiting now, and can truthfully say -- Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!

"Come, Lord, to the Bride of Thy love,
In fulness of majesty come;
And give us the mansions above,
Prepared in Thy heavenly home."

Speak to the Rock

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock; so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as He commanded him (Num. 20:7-9).

We find the story of the smitten rock first presented to us in the book of Exodus. It took place before the law was given, and is a fine example of grace -- the grace of God to ungodly, sinful man. The people were in the deepest necessity; they had no water to drink. Day after day their thirst increased. There were no wells at hand. They might make the most diligent search, and put all their energies into exercise, in digging deep in all directions, still it was a barren and thirsty land, wherein was no water. Weak, parched, and prostrate, they had no power whatever of meeting their necessity. They were perishing with thirst, and had no water to drink. But more than this. They were sinners -- they murmured; they tempted God, and were ready to stone His servant. Thus they were unworthy as well as needy. God might justly have allowed them to perish, for they merited His wrath and displeasure; but He took occasion to deal in grace instead of judgment. His pitying eye beheld their need; His loving heart compassionated them; His infinite wisdom and mercy devised a way of deliverance; and His almighty arm speedily carried it out. The question was, Could God, would God, give this thirsty, sinful, perishing people water to drink? Yes, He could and would do so, consistently with His own holy attributes, and that too in a way that should be to the praise of His glory. By smiting another instead of them, His justice would be satisfied, and His mercy freely flow. This is the way of grace to sinful, helpless man in the cross of Christ, and was shewn forth in the type of the smitten rock.

The Lord said unto Moses, Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt SMITE THE ROCK, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel {Ex. 17:6}.

Thus, in the way of grace, the needy sinful people had an abundant supply of water to satisfy their thirst.

I say, this is a fine example of grace, and is important, because we are told in the New Testament that we are saved by grace:

By grace are ye saved, through faith {Eph. 2:8};

but perhaps few things are so little understood as grace. It is said by some that grace means that God will do His part, if we will do ours; but this entirely destroys the thought of grace. Others say, that it means unmerited love; but it means more than this, for it brings favour and blessing to those who only deserve punishment and destruction; it brings eternal life and glory to such as have merited eternal death and banishment; and flows freely to us through the smitten Son of God, who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. It is the death of Christ, then, that is here typified by the smitten rock. There the

stripes that we deserved were laid upon Him, and thence the water of life flows freely.

"From all His wounds new blessings flow,
A sea of joy without a shore."

Grace, then, is only for sinners; it springs from God, is manifested in the death of Christ, and satisfies the thirsty souls of those who there taste and see that the Lord is good; and as it was only water from the smitten rock that quenched the thirst of the perishing Israelites, so it is only the blood of the cross that gives peace to a sin-sick soul. For a thirsty, perishing Israelite to have turned his back upon the waters gushing out so abundantly from the smitten rock, instead of drinking thereof, would be judged to be the height of madness; how much more so is it now to turn away from the crucified Son of God, who died to save sinners!

Having said thus much on the smiting of the rock, let us now turn more immediately to the subject before us; and first, we may notice that, after the people of Israel had drank the water from the rock, they lived, and fought the battles of the Lord; but after a while, though the rock never left them, they thirsted again, as we find in this chapter. This is a remarkable type, and serves to show us that, after we have received the Lord Jesus, after we have obtained life and peace through faith in His name, after we may have fought the battles of the Lord, after we may have drank for months and years the water of life, and enjoyed the presence of the Lord, yet we shall feel barren and thirsty, if we cease to live upon Christ; if we turn from Him, and lose the taste and comfort of His love.

In pursuing our meditation, we might remark --

1. On the state of the believer when not living upon Christ;
2. On failure in the service of God;
3. Consider what is the Christian's true path; and
4. Glance at the blessings connected with it.

1. THE STATE OF THE BELIEVER WHEN NOT LIVING UPON CHRIST.

So long as we abide in the Lord Jesus, dwell on His love, live in His presence, sit at His feet, rest on His promises, feed on His word, love His ways, pour out our hearts to Him, and draw out of His fulness, our peace flows as a river; we overcome in conflict, escape out of temptation, bear our sufferings with fortitude, fight the good fight of faith, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. But when the eye and heart forget Christ, when we turn from Him as the smitten Rock, the fountain of life and love, then the barrenness and sorrows of the wilderness press heavily upon us, and disappointment, rebellion, murmuring, and other bitter fruits of unbelief easily manifest themselves. Perhaps no people act more

foolishly, are more miserable, or more exhibit the unlovely tempers and evils of the flesh, than those believers who forget the Lord Jesus, and draw not refreshment and blessing out of His fulness. The enemy, finding such off their guard, easily overcomes them with his fiery darts, acts upon the pride and lusts of the flesh, until, instead of the triumphant song of

Worthy is the Lamb {Rev. 5:12},

their lips give utterance to desponding and complaining exclamations.

It has been said by another, that “the blood of Christ both strengthens our inner man, and keeps down the weeds of the flesh.” And so it is; for, in the exercise of faith, we draw from Christ, and are so spiritually strengthened, that we are able to keep under carnal lusts. But, though we be true disciples of Christ, severed from Him we grow weak spiritually, and fleshly desires and ways spring up, and are sometimes painfully manifested. Accordingly, this chapter shows us, that when the people had no water from the rock, and thirsted, that they gathered themselves together against the servants of God; that they chode with Moses, complained of the barrenness of the wilderness, and concluded that they would die, and never see the land of promise. Their experience was that of darkness, barrenness, and misery, because they got away from the only fountain of refreshment and blessing. And so it is with God’s people now. Oh, how many complaining children of God may trace their present sadness of soul, not, as they suppose, to the circumstances that have crossed their path, but to the two evils of forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water! How can we be happy apart from Him who is our life and salvation? How can we be making melody in our hearts, so long as the spring of all our joys ceases to be viewed by us as the river of life to our souls? Those who cleave to the Lord Jesus, and walk in His ways, may assuredly count upon the comfort of the Holy Ghost as their portion; and while they will not be without the trials of the wilderness, they will realize the present help and mercy of God *in* trouble, and in God’s own good time deliverance *from* trouble. Thus abiding in the Lord Jesus, we shall be happy and fruitful, but severed from Him we shall be barren and unhappy; and, as the apostle Peter saith, such will be blind, unable to see afar off, and will forget that they were purged from their old sins. How important, then, that the Christian should not feed on ashes, or seek in any measure satisfaction at the worldling’s swine-trough; but, knowing that Christ is all, live upon Christ -- His person, work, fitness, fulness, and offices; hide, as it were, in His wounds, drink deeply into His gracious words and ways, treasure up His promises, eat His flesh, dwell on His unutterable and unchanging love, seek more and more His unsearchable riches; so that the constant language of our souls may be,

His mouth is most sweet, yea, He is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend {S of S 5:16}.

2. FAILURE IN SERVICE is also recorded in this affecting narrative. Moses desired to serve the Lord, and to serve His people; but he did not do so in God’s way; instead, therefore, of its being acceptable service, it was so displeasing to the Lord, that he was

not allowed to go into the land on account of it. It was zeal, but not according to knowledge. God told Moses to take the rod, but did not tell him to use it as he did. He was also told to *speak* to the rock, but instead of that he *smote* it. God used no rebuke in speaking to His servant about the assembly, but Moses called them

rebels {Num. 20:10}.

All these things show that Moses was not serving in the temper and spirit of the Lord. To seek to satisfy God’s thirsty people was well, but he did not act in it for the glory of God. And it is important to notice that, notwithstanding Moses’ failure, God acted then, as He often does now -- He brought blessing to the people, though He chastened His servant for his inconsistent conduct. The failure was very great, not only in its not being obedience to the Lord’s plain command, but in spoiling the type, which was, doubtless, intended to teach us that the rock once smitten, need never be smitten again, but would give forth refreshing streams at the cry of faith, as we now know Christ.

The rod here was evidently not the rod of Moses, wherewith he smote the rock; that rod Moses took with him on the top of the hill, after the rock in Horeb was smitten, and we never hear of it afterwards. Moses’ rod there did its work, and the type teaches us that the law had its claims met in the wounds, bruises, and death of the Son of God. The rod ordered to be taken in this scene at Meribah was the rod which was *before the Lord* (Num. 20:9), which was Aaron’s rod (see Num. 17:1-5), and teaches us not about smiting, but about the resurrection and priesthood of Christ. We are told that this dead rod

budded, and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds {Num. 17:8}.

And was laid up before the testimony

and the Lord said, Thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not {Num. 17:10}.

Thus we see shadowed forth the resurrection and priesthood of Christ. It can, therefore, easily be seen how consistent with the truth it would be for Moses to hold forth this beautiful rod beside the rock gushing with his waters at his word, and how contrary to the typical meaning it was to smite the rock, especially with such a rod. How blessed now to know Jesus in resurrection-glory as the Rock once smitten to save His people from death, but now before the Lord; and that we have only to contemplate Him to be filled with adoring gratitude, only to speak to Him, and His blessings flow with abundant refreshment.

How much religious service in the present day, we fear, is not acceptable to God! How much there may be that God’s eye detects as being chiefly the busy energy of the flesh, and not spiritual -- not in the obedience of faith -- not in accordance with the truth of God! How important that we should not only be addicting ourselves to the Lord’s work, but that we should carry it out in God’s way, and for His glory! But this leads us to consider --

3. THE CHRISTIAN’S TRUE PATH. Declension of soul, and failure in service, generally go together, as we see in Peter, who first followed the Lord

afar off {Luke 22:54},

and in mistaken zeal,

cut off the servant's ear {see John 18:10}.

The Christian's true path is communion with God, and obedience to His word; and the backsliding and failing Christian must return thence, if he would be happy, and glorify God. The believer's calling is unto

fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ
{see 1 John 1:3};

to walk with God, to realize that all his springs are in Him, and to wait for His Son from heaven. Christ, the true Rock that was smitten, is his all-satisfying portion. He has to do with the Lord Jesus who was crucified, who said,

It is finished {John 19:30}!

and bowed His head, and gave up the Ghost. He knows that that one finished work of eternal redemption is perfect, and that by it He hath perfected for ever all those who truly believe in Him; so that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. He, therefore, looks to Jesus risen and glorified, the slain Lamb on the right hand of God, as the One who has all power in heaven and in earth. His business, then, in every need is to

speak to the Rock {see Num. 20:8},

and to prove that living water continually flows from Him.

The Christian has generally much joy at first, because his thirst is satisfied by simply drinking of the waters of the smitten rock, and Christ is all to him. He knows little of the deceitfulness of his own heart, the trials of the wilderness, or of the seductions of Satan. After a while, however, when unexpected difficulties and necessities cross his path, he perhaps unconsciously loses sight of Christ, by being taken up with the sorrowful circumstances, and thirsts for refreshment and comfort. But where will he find it? Surely he will find it flow only from that same Rock which at first quenched his thirst, the Lamb who is now in the midst of the throne. This, then, is the Christian's true course: looking unto Jesus, abiding in Jesus, drawing from Jesus, learning of Jesus, whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace; or as the apostle expresses it,

Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God {Phil. 4:6}.

Speak to the Rock; every need should lead us to the fulness of the Lord Jesus; every temptation to His sympathy and power; every occasion of blessing with thanksgiving to Him; every sorrow should lead us to contemplate the sorrows of Jesus; every act of service should be done in dependence on the Lord Jesus; yea, concerning everything we should speak to Him. Those who thus set the Lord always before them will experience that He is at their right hand, and that they cannot be moved.

"Happy they who trust in Jesus;
Sweet their portion is, and sure."

Oh, ye dear children of God! are you cast down by reason of the trials of the way? Are you oppressed, and fainting under a sense of your many needs, many sorrows, many achings of heart?

Oh, speak to the Rock! Go and tell the Lord Jesus all your sorrows, and all your perplexities; yea, tell Him all -- pour out your heart before Him. He will refresh your spirit, lift up your hands that hang down, sustain your confidence, give you wisdom, and show you that He careth for you. He bids you trust in Him at all times -- not some times, but all times -- therefore speak to Him this time. You may have proved it a blessed thing to speak to Him in times past: oh, speak to Him now! Cast all your care on Him, for He says, He careth for you. Cast every burden upon the Lord, and He will sustain you. You need not fear any sorrow, if it only lead you to the Lord Jesus; and every felt need will be a blessing, if it only be a fresh errand to the mercy-seat. Fellow-Christians! the Rock still gives forth His water, and refreshing streams still flow freely to us from our Lord Jesus. It is vain to look elsewhere. Princes cannot help us. Creatures are broken cisterns; and it is written,

Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help {Isa. 31:1}!

and,

Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm {Jer. 17:5}.

Without Christ we can no nothing; but there is no uncertainty in calling upon the Lord Jesus.

Speak to the Rock, and it shall give forth His waters {see Num. 20:8}.

Such is the way of blessing; for it is written,

Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him {Psa. 2:12}.

Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors {Prov. 8:34}.

In this way only will true Christians be happy, and thus be fitted for the Lord's work; for

the joy of the Lord is your strength {Neh. 8:10}.

It is only by the written word, unfolded to us by the Spirit, that we know how to serve God acceptably.

If a man love me, he will keep my words {John 14:23},
said Jesus. It seemed a little thing when God said,

Speak to the rock,

that Moses should smite it; but it dishonored God. God's word is to be heeded by us, and obeyed; and drinking of the water from the rock and honoring His word, we shall render acceptable service. The importance of simply obeying God's word is again taught us in 1 Sam. 15, God commanded Saul to slay *all* the Amalekites, but Saul only slew some. This was disobedience; and God told him, that

to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams {1 Sam. 15:22}.

We see another example in the days of David. God had ordered that none were to carry the ark of God but the Levites; but David ordered it otherwise. The consequence was, that disappointment, chastisement, and failure, accompanied the service (see 1 Chron. 13:10); but afterwards, when the king acted according to the word of the Lord, and rendered acceptable service, it was connected with the Lord's blessing, and the people's joy and

gladness. How important, then, that we should beware of the traditions of men, and heed and obey the written word of God!

4. Let us now glance at THE BLESSINGS CONNECTED WITH DRINKING OF THE WATER FROM THE ROCK. The people's thirst was quenched, their murmurings ceased, their spirits were refreshed, and their hearts were cheered. But the sequel shows us two things more: first, that they acted graciously; and secondly, they fought against the enemies of the Lord valiantly. In reference to the first point, we are told that they sent kind messages to the king of Edom, and when the Edomites repeatedly refused to let Israel pass through their land on any terms, they went another way. This was carrying out the mind of God, for Edom was Israel's brother after the flesh; and it reminds us of the fact, that those who taste and enjoy most of the grace of God will be kind, yielding, and gracious to others. Who would have thought, a short time before, that those rebellious Israelites would be so soon seen acting in such a gracious temper; but they had drank of the water from the rock -- they had seen and believed the goodness of the Lord, and this had made the difference.

With regard to the second point, when the Canaanites attacked them, and took some of their brethren prisoners, they went forth in the strength of the Lord, and fought valiantly and successfully against the enemy, and utterly destroyed both them and their cities. They fought for their fallen brethren, and against the enemies of the Lord. Is it possible that these very people were so recently chiding with Moses, and setting themselves against him and Aaron? Yes; but they had drank of the water from the rock; they had been restored in their minds to a consciousness that God was for them, and not against them, and this had made the difference. Do not such considerations so endear the cross of Christ to our souls, that we cheerfully sing --

"The more, through grace, ourselves we know,
The more rejoiced are we to bow
In faith beneath Thy cross;
To trust in Thine atoning blood,
And look to Thee for every good,
And count all else but loss."

Soon, beloved, the Lord Jesus will come again, and our pilgrimage days will have for ever passed away; we shall then no longer know the sorrows and drought of a barren wilderness. Now it is our highest privilege to

speak to the Rock

-- to hold intercourse by faith with our blessed Lord Jesus, whom having not seen we love; then we shall see Him face to face, and admiring His eternal beauties and excellencies with unmingled and unchanging joy and gratitude, we shall be FOR EVER WITH THE LORD.

The New Birth

Ye must be born again (John 3:7).

In our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, we see how wisely, faithfully, and graciously He met a professedly religious man. The Lord's mode of dealing with this Pharisee was different from His way with the woman of Samaria. The latter was a notoriously sinful woman, unconscious of her guilty state; the blessed Lord therefore brought her at once to a sense of her ignorance and foul course, by saying,

Go, call thy husband, and come hither {John 4:16}.

But the former case was that of an outwardly blameless man blinded by false religion; the first thing, therefore the Lord did with him was to cut down his religion, root and branch, and then show him that he was a perishing sinner needing mercy, and, like a bitten Israelite, could only live by looking to God's remedy. The religion of this man of the Pharisees, I say, was false, though not altogether so; for Satan's deadliest snares are composed of a mixture of truth and error. It was so with the woman in the garden, and also with the Pharisees, and it is common also in the present day. Nicodemus believed in God, assented to the veracity of the Scriptures, held the existence of both angels and spirits, and the resurrection of the body. These points were according to truth; but the grand foundation-truth of the gospel -- redemption by blood -- was thought nothing of; this was the fatal error. The measure of truth, little as it was, held by a man of such dignity and education, only tended to keep his mind in darkness, and enable him more successfully to spread his false religion among those who came in his way; whereas, a person wallowing in pollution and transgression, without any religious profession, would have no such temptation; hence our Lord said of some,

Publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you {Matt. 21:31}.

The erroneous character of this man's religion was soon exposed by our blessed Lord, for He knew what was in man. The religion of this

man of the Pharisees {John 3:1}

was not spiritual. He knew nothing of the new birth. This is fatal ignorance. He passed over man's fall in Adam, and his being now dead in trespasses and sins; he saw no necessity for repentance, or the new birth, and yet took his place as a religious man, offering service in the name of God as if he were holy instead of being polluted; considering himself a creditable member of a popular religious sect, and considered worthy of dignity and esteem as such by others. But it was carnal religion, which, we are told, cannot please God; and as man in the flesh cannot rise above his own level, it was necessarily connected with walking and acting to be seen of men, instead of as in the sight of God --

Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God {Luke 16:15}.

But Nicodemus had heard of Jesus, and desired some intercourse with Him. How, then, could it be accomplished? How could this honored

Master of Israel {John 3:10},
this

ruler of the Jews {John 3:1},
have an interview with the despised Nazarene? What would the people say? Nicodemus, however, was not at rest, for he believed that Jesus was

a teacher come from God {John 3:2},
and see Him he must. He therefore came to Jesus by night; for in this way he could satisfy his conscience without displeasing men, or exposing himself to their scorn and persecution. Such is man. Such was the spirit in which this

man of the Pharisees {John 3:1}
approached the Lord of glory. His thought was about Jesus being a teacher. He might have imagined it would be beneficial to him professionally to listen to His instruction. Though he was constantly occupied with the letter of Scripture, and the religious duties of the synagogue, it does not appear to have once entered his mind that he was a sinner, and needed a Savior. Now pause, and mark the way of Christ with this man. Did He say, You come to me in such an unworthy way, I cannot grant you an audience? Did He say, Cast away this and that first, and then I'll speak to you? Did He say, Get better first, and then I'll receive you? Oh, no. The loving Savior in this, as in every other instance, fulfilled His own blessed word,

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out {John 6:37}.

How full of encouragement this is, and how blessedly it unfolds to us the graciousness of the Lord Jesus! Nicodemus did not see that he was

condemned already {John 3:18},
and exposed to the wrath of God. Alas, alas! a

Master of Israel,
a teacher of others, and not concerned about his own salvation. Religion not true, a religion of dead works, the religion of the fathers, the religion of the people, the rites and customs of synagogue duties, with their attendant honors and official trappings, was the powerful current which was hurling this

ruler of the Jews,
and others, downward at a fearfully rapid course, and that, too, without any idea of God's way of salvation. How very solemn! But is it not the same now? What is the real condition of thousands around us? Is it that they deny the existence of Almighty God? Do they contend that He should not be worshipped? Do they set aside ecclesiastical office? Do they dispute the veracity of the Holy

Scriptures? Certainly not. But if you ask them if they have experienced the new birth, you will find that some will hang down their heads in confusion; others will judge you a ranter, or a wild fanatic; while others will try to shelter themselves behind some delusive sacramental form, and deny altogether the truth of the new birth by the word of truth, and the sovereign power of the Holy Ghost. But some, perhaps, may say, Is it not very uncharitable to conclude, that all who have not experienced the new birth are hastening on the broad road to eternal destruction? May there not be something good and hopeful in them without this? We unhesitatingly reply, No; because the Lord Jesus said,

Except a man be BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE the kingdom of God {John 3:3}.

Oh that the Holy Spirit might so work in the hearts of thousands of professors around us, that they might know the folly and unprofitableness of that religion which does not begin with being born again!

The first word of our text shows us how pointed and personal our Lord was in His ministry --

YE must be born again {John 3:7}.

This tells out His faithful love. He did not propound dry doctrines, or get up eloquent addresses, to please the itching ears of His audience. No. He was the Faithful Witness, and He came not to destroy, but to save. He knew the worth of the soul, and salvation had its paramount claim in His mind. His loving heart would bear with the unworthy manner in which He was approached, and set salvation before His hearers in the plainest and most pointed way. To the cavilling Jews in the synagogue His word was,

Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you {John 6:53}.

On another occasion He said,

Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins {John 8:23, 24}.

Again we see Him standing in the midst of a crowd, and saying,

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish {Luke 13:3, 5}.

To the careless Samaritan He said,

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water {John 4:10}.

He said to the seeking blind man,

What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? {Luke 18:41}.

And when he replied,

Lord, that I may receive my sight {Luke 18:41},

Jesus said unto him,

Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee {Luke 18:42}.

And so in the text before us, our Lord did not set before Nicodemus some profound points of theology for his consideration, as the ruler perhaps expected; neither was it a

display of eloquence, such as a learned man might have appreciated; neither did He set truth in a general way before him. No; He came at once to the point, and said,

YE must be born again {John 3:7}!

Oh that searching word, YE! This is Divine ministry; this is the way of the perfect preacher; and this is the style that should be imitated in the present day. It is when the Holy Ghost powerfully and personally applies the truth, so as to say to the conscience,

Thou art the man {2 Sam. 12:7},

that decided good may be expected. Persons may read the Bible, and think it is all about others; they may hear the gospel, and say that the preacher was very faithful to some present; but it is when a person feels that the truth read or heard affects himself, that we may expect blessed results. "Oh, yes," said a learned gentleman, after reading the epistle to the Romans, "I see this doctrine in the Bible." "But do you feel it in your heart?" replied his friend. That question led him to consider, and make the truth of such personal application as to be the means of his conversion. Fellow-Christians! we should be pointed and personal, as well as deeply affectionate, in putting the gospel before persons, both publicly and privately. Clear doctrines are not enough. We should remember our Master's oft-repeated word, YE! People do not think we are in earnest and sincere, if we only make general statements. I was much struck the other day in reading an account of a young man. A faithful servant of Christ said to him, "Do you know that you are going on to perdition?" "No!" said he, "neither do I think your people believe it either. My mother is one of your congregation, and I am sure she loves me dearly; and if she believed it, I am persuaded she would have told me of it. My sister also goes there; she loves me very much; and I am sure, if she believed it, she would throw her arms round my neck, and say, Don't, oh, don't go to perdition!"

We may next notice how decidedly the Lord insisted on the necessity of the new birth --

YE MUST be born again {John 3:7}.

Not you may, but you *must*; not, you should desire it merely, but you *must*. Yes, without the new birth, you *must* be for ever in darkness --

you cannot see the kingdom of God {see John 3:3};

without the new birth, you *must* be shut out for ever from the presence of God --

you cannot enter into the kingdom of God {see John 3:5}.

How plain! how decisive! How essential to be

born of the Spirit {John 3:6}!

This secret of the new birth the learned Pharisee was entirely ignorant of, and vainly tried to argue the impossibility of a second birth; but it only drew from the loving, faithful heart of Jesus a thrice-repeated testimony to the absolute necessity of it, and the explanation that the new birth was from above and spiritual. This positive declaration at once cut at the root of the Pharisee's religion, and razed to the ground all his cherished confidence and expectation; for it pronounced a verdict on the best man in the

flesh, as being so apostate and corrupt as to be unfit for the presence of God. But while it exposed man's total inability to fit himself for the kingdom of God, it referred to the power and goodness of God in quickening the dead in trespasses and sins. The doctrine our Lord here propounds is of the highest importance; for men may be moral, amiable, benevolent, outwardly religious, and the like, yet they must be born again. They may be high even in ecclesiastical office, far advanced in theological education, yet they must be born again. Man's thought of religion is, that he must gradually improve, and perhaps be ultimately good enough to be saved. God's religion is, first to have life, and then rejoice in an assured hope of glory. Man's thought is to work for life; God's way is to work from life. Man proposes to himself eternal life at the end; God presents it to the true believer at the very beginning. Man's wisdom consists in the reformation and improvement of the flesh, with persevering efforts to pile up a quantity of supposed creature-merit and self-righteousness; the Lord Jesus knocks it all down with that uncompromising sentence,

Ye MUST be born again.

But what are we to understand by the new birth?

Ye must be BORN AGAIN.

Certainly it is not an alteration of the old fleshly nature into that which is spiritual; for our Lord in the previous verse clearly shows the distinction between the two natures and the two births:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit {John 3:6}.

The apostles too, in their writings, continually keep up this distinction of the two natures, not only as a matter of doctrine, but also of experience and practice. The believer is spoken of as made a partaker of the Divine nature, and as having the Spirit of Christ in him; his experience is referred to as necessarily one of conflict, because of the opposite workings of the two natures -- flesh and Spirit:

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would {Gal. 5:17}.

While in reference to practice, he is exhorted to

walk in the Spirit,

and

not fulfil the lusts of the flesh {Gal. 5:16};

to

put off . . . the old man which is corrupt, . . . and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness {Eph. 4:22-24}.

This is a subject of immense importance; for if a really exercised soul imagines that being born again is a conversion of the old Adam, sinful nature into that which is holy, he cannot have perfect peace; for he must find that his experience does not correspond with the idea. Hence many a quickened soul thinks he cannot be a Christian, because he finds, with a principle of delight in the law of God, that there is another principle working in him which is contrary to holiness; while the truth is, he would not be

born again,

if he had no experience of this inward conflict. His conscience must find peace alone through the blood of the cross. Instead of Paul saying that he felt sin was rooted out of him, he says,

Sin dwelleth in me {see Rom. 7:17};

though instead of obeying it, he by the Spirit mortified the deeds of the body, he kept his body under and brought it into subjection. He regarded his {the}

old man {Rom. 6:6}

as an enemy, and kept it under; and exhorted saints not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, but to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Being

born again

clearly, then, is not a conversion of

the flesh

into

the Spirit.

Neither does the new birth consist in mere outward reformations and moral amendments; for

a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit {see Matt. 7:18}.

Let the immoral become moral, the licentious chaste, or the drunkard sober, still, before God, he is only

born of the flesh {John 3:6}.

You may trim neatly, or cut off the branches of a thorn tree, and make its appearance more agreeable to the eye, still it is a thorn, and cannot bear grapes. The new birth, then, is something very different from outward reformation. Neither are persons born again by sacramental rites. It is easy to say it is so, but it is a fearful delusion. It is true that our Lord spoke of being born of water, but it was of water and of the Spirit:

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God {John 3:5}.

By water our Lord, doubtless, referred to the word of grace, that living water

which God dispenses to thirsty souls, as presented in the story of the woman of Samaria (John 4:10-14). We read also in the first epistle of Peter of being

born again {1 Pet. 1:23}

by the word.

The new birth is a spiritual work,

so is every one that is born of the Spirit {John 3:8}.

We feel His operations in our hearts, but we can tell nothing of His coming or going: It is a heavenly work; we are born from above [margin]. It is not man's work, but the work of God; we are

born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God {see John 1:13}.

It is a new life, so that those who are partakers of it are new creatures:

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature {2 Cor. 5:17}.

It is done once and for ever; we are

born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever {1 Pet. 1:23}.

This new creation, then, is clearly the work of God the Holy Ghost by the word:

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, &c. {Eph. 2:10}

Nicodemus might well be astounded at our Lord's decisive preaching, and exclaim,

How can these things be? {John 3:9}.

which at once opened the door for our Lord to present to him the wondrous story of the cross. Having broken down the ruler's religion by the doctrine of the new birth, Jesus now presents to him the glorious salvation of the God of all grace, and shows him that the only place a man can truthfully take is that of a perishing sinner, and a receiver of life from Him. This is the way in which sinners are born again. Man is a fallen creature; he has been driven out from the presence of God, and is

dead in sins {Eph. 2:5}.

Jesus is the fountain of life, and the cross is the fountain opened; there the water of life flows freely. Christ crucified is the smitten Rock, whence streams of living water flow abundantly to the needy and undone; and there the Spirit brings perishing, thirsty souls, to look and live; to drink and live for ever. Wherever else they drink they thirst again, but whoso drinketh of the water that Jesus gives shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Yes, Jesus crucified, risen, and glorified, is everlasting consolation, a never-failing, soul-satisfying portion. There is no possibility of being born again, apart from Christ crucified and risen. There the river of life flows. There it is written,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

Such, thus believing on the Lord Jesus for salvation, have received Him whom God hath sent, and have passed from death unto life.

An intelligent Israelite ought to have known something about the new birth. The plain statement of Ezekiel,

I will give them a new heart {see Ezek. 11:19},

should have been enough to have taught the ruler this, while the prophet's vision of the resurrection of the dry bones should have shown him that God is the Quickener of the dead. Our Lord, therefore, exposes still further the ignorance of this

man of the Pharisees {John 3:1}

by the question,

Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? {John 3:10}

The ruler's question, however,

How can these things be? {John 3:9}

was speedily responded to; and the difficulty, of how a man is born again, was very simply and beautifully told out by our Lord. He refers the enquirer to His own Scriptures; the Book of Numbers is selected, and the well-known tale of the serpent of brass is brought forth as the key to unlock the mystery of the new birth. The Pharisee's conscience is brought at once to the fountain of living water; the bitten, dying Israelites are depicted as receiving life through looking at the serpent of brass lifted up; and there Nicodemus might learn that, with all his Pharisaic religion and theological science, he is still dead in sins, and, like the bitten Israelite, must perish, unless he look simply to the Son of man lifted up on Calvary's cross. By looking only to the brazen serpent, the dying Israelite lived; and so now, dead and ruined sinners receive life eternal only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was life, eternal life, that Christ presented to the sinful Pharisee, as the free gift of God to

every one {John 6:40},

any one {see John 7:37, 10:9},

whosoever {John 3:15, 16}

believeth on the Son of God.

In this beautiful discourse with Nicodemus, our Lord showed also how competent He was for this great work of giving new life to the dead in sins, and also of the amazing power and virtue of the work of the cross, by telling him that He was Son of God as well as Son of man -- God and man in one person -- in heaven and yet on earth.

No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, &c. {John 3:13-17}.

The Lord also most plainly showed the freeness of the grace of God, that is, the willingness of His heart to receive all, and cast out none that come to Him, by twice saying,

Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The doctrine of the new birth is therefore taught by our Lord in connection with the cross. A new birth is inseparable from new life; that new life is here defined to be not temporal, but eternal, and as flowing only to us from God, through the death of Christ, and that to every one that believeth. Therefore our Lord told Nicodemus, that to be born again of water and of the Spirit, he must take the place of a ruined, perishing sinner before the Son of God, who was crucified, and thus he would receive eternal life, and stand no longer as one condemned, but as having pardon and acceptance with God. This, indeed, is being born of God. The Holy Spirit always directs the soul to the person and work of Christ. The Holy Ghost does not say, Look at me for salvation, look to my operations for peace, look to my gifts for assurance. Oh, no! He is the Glorifier of Christ, therefore He saith, Look to Jesus lifted up, look to the Lamb slain, the Savior of sinners; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; and if

we be led of the Spirit, we shall surely testify of Christ. Were I merely to preach, Ye must be born again, it would be no message of glad tidings, no balm for the weary and heavy laden, no comfort for the anxious enquirer; but when we connect with the doctrine of the new birth the blessed truth, that Christ crucified is an ocean of boundless love, an overflowing fountain of living water, a well of everlasting life to every sinner that believes, we announce good tidings of great joy.

My reader, what think YOU of Christ? Has your thirsty soul drank the living water of His salvation? or are you perishing with hunger while there is bread enough and to spare in the Father's house? The fashion, pleasure, and honor of this present evil world are rapidly passing away. The summons of the God of all flesh may soon call you into His presence. Your own conscience admonishes you that you are a sinner. Experience has long ago convinced you that you are hastening to the chamber of death. You have often tried earth's best refreshments, and as often proved that he that drinketh of this water shall thirst again. You have avoided the foul habits of the licentious; you have shunned the companionship of the riotous; you have declined to walk with scoffers; you refuse the assumptious vanity of rationalists; you have withdrawn from Socinian blasphemy, and the infidelity of popery; but have you been born again? or, in other words, have you, as a guilty, undone sinner, been brought into God's presence, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation? If not, dear reader, let me affectionately say to you, that you are dead in sins, and what you want is life -- eternal life! Sacraments and ordinances of any kind cannot give you life. Separation from immoralities cannot give you life. Withdrawing from the foulest forms of blasphemy and delusion still leaves you without life. Enlisting yourself among the ranks of your most religious neighbours cannot give you life. The strictest outward propriety cannot give you life. Neither can church office, ecclesiastical honors, or theological knowledge, as we have seen in Nicodemus, give you life. God only can give you life, and that life -- eternal life -- is in His Son Jesus Christ. Beware, then, lest you die without Christ; for

he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

"Rise, my soul! behold, 'tis Jesus!
Jesus fills thy wondering eyes;
See Him now, in glory seated,
Where thy sins no more can rise.

"There, in righteousness transcendent,
Lo! He doth in heaven appear;
Shows the blood of His atonement
As thy title to be there.

"All thy sins were laid upon Him;
Jesus bore them on the tree;
God, who knew them, laid them on Him;
And, believing, thou art free.

"God now brings thee to His dwelling,
Spreads for thee His feast divine;
Bids thee welcome, ever telling
What a portion there is thine.

"In that circle of God's favour --
Circle of the Father's love --
All is rest, and rest for ever,
All is perfectness above.

"Blessed, glorious word, "For ever!"
Yea, "for ever" is the word;
Nothing can the ransomed sever,
Nought divide them from the Lord."

Law and Grace

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:3, 4).

It is not by persuasive eloquence, clear reasoning, appalling sights, or by thrilling appeals to the natural feelings, that people are converted to God. No. It is by the word of truth. Our Lord taught this. He said,

If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead {Luke 16:31};

as much as to say, They have the Bible, they hear sound gospel-preaching, and if the truth does not move them, nothing else will make them flee from the wrath to come. Christ is the truth. The Holy Ghost is the Spirit of truth; and it is the truth that He uses in converting souls. It is the Spirit's office to guide into all truth; and surely in these days we are made to hear the voice of God very peculiarly, saying,

Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts {Zech. 4:6}.

At a time like this, when we see men using human appliances, and contending for expediency; when we so often hear of such sad statements as "handmaids of the gospel," "stepping-stones of the gospel," &c., it is most important to see that it is the truth alone which really accomplishes the work of God. We find this often brought before us in the Scriptures. Peter informs us that we are

born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever {1 Pet. 1:23}.

James says,

Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth {James 1:18}.

Paul declares,

In Christ Jesus, I have begotten you through the gospel {1 Cor. 4:15}.

And our Lord's promise to His disciples was,

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free {John 8:32}.

These inspired testimonies should be carefully pondered, because they show us the immense value that God puts on the truth, as well as our deep responsibility in relation to it. And oh, how thankful should we be for the Bible! How blessed to have such an unalterable standard of truth! What condescension of the Holy Spirit to come down to reveal and apply the truth to us! How careful should we be to ascertain what the truth of God is! How prayerfully should we search the Scriptures, in dependence on the Spirit's teaching, for the truth! How important that those who preach should

preach the Word {2 Tim. 4:2};

and how necessary that those who listen should take heed to what they receive, so that their faith may not stand in the wisdom of men, but on the word of the living and true God, which will never pass away!

Perhaps nothing has so corrupted the truth of *the gospel* as the common practice of blending *the law* with it. Few things are more dissimilar, and kept more distinct in the Scriptures, yet they are often so mingled together in the present day as to destroy the simplicity and truth of both law and gospel. It was in this way the truth of Christ was so corrupted among the Galatian saints, that the apostle faithfully told them that Christ had become of no effect unto those who were justified by the law, for they were fallen from grace. It is, then, a matter of great importance to be able clearly to distinguish between law and gospel; for the believer is not under the law, but under grace.

In pursuing our enquiry after the truth of God concerning these subjects, it will be well to consider --

1. What we are to understand by the law.
2. What were its effects?
3. What is grace, and its effects?
4. Notice some points of special contrast between the law and the gospel; and
5. Make some application of the subject.

1. WHAT ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE LAW?

What the law could not do {Rom. 8:3}.

By the law in this text is evidently meant the commands given to Israel on Mount Sinai four hundred and thirty years after the call of Abraham (Gal. 3:17). It made righteous demands upon man, promising life to those who fully obeyed --

This do, and thou shalt live {Luke 10:28};

and pronouncing a curse on those who were disobedient in any degree --

Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them {Gal. 3:10}.

Thus we see that the law knew nothing of mercy, but its demands were so strict that an offender in one point was held guilty of all (James 2:10). It is therefore vain and delusive for persons to try to shelter themselves under the idea, that because they are not conscious of having broken all the laws of God, they are not exposed to His just condemnation. Nor is it reasonable. Man's sense of justice towards his fellow-man is, that the breaker of one of the laws of the country has committed an act of rebellion, and is therefore deservedly exposed to punishment. It is not necessary for a man to have perpetrated robbery twenty times before he is pronounced guilty; but if in one instance he is proved to have

committed an act of robbery, he is liable to punishment as a breaker of the law. And is God less just than man? Certainly not. He is just in condemning and executing vengeance on all breakers of His holy law. The question of the law is not, how much have you transgressed, or how many breaches of the law are you guilty of? but have you sinned at all? for

the soul that sinneth, it shall die {Ezek. 18:4}.

God has only one character of condemnation for sin, that is, death -- eternal death.

The wages of sin is death {Rom. 6:23}.

The law of Moses consisted of two tables, one containing laws relating to man's conduct toward God, and the other to his conduct toward his neighbour.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself {Luke 10:27}.

These were the demands of the law. There was nothing unholy or unjust in it, and a person coming up at all times, and in all things, to this standard, would prove himself a righteous person, and would live. We may try to modify the law, or to pare down its sweeping demands, or endeavour to excuse ourselves for not complying with it, in order to meet the exercises of conscience; but the law permits nothing of the kind. If the law is broken, curse must follow. Neither did all the ordinances and sacrifices offered under the law alter this or remove the guilt; because it is impossible that the blood of bulls and of goats could take away sin: the most these things could do was to give ceremonial cleanness, and to point to that future sacrifice, which would make an end of sin, and bring in everlasting righteousness. The law was a rigid test to try and make manifest. If there were no laws in the country, there could be no transgression, and, consequently, no punishment; but if laws were made, the offenders would be made known, and its demands executed, for such is the nature of law; therefore it is written,

The law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression (Rom. 4:15).

2. THE EFFECTS OF THE LAW.

It was weak through the flesh {Rom. 8:3};

that is, it was unable to meet man's need, because he was a fallen, helpless sinner. Scarcely had the terrible thunders and terrors of Mount Sinai passed, and the people put themselves under the obligations of the law, when they were found dancing round a golden calf, exclaiming,

These be thy gods, O Israel, that brought thee up out of the land of Egypt {Ex. 32:4}!

thus violating the first sentence of the law, which said,

Thou shalt have no other gods before me (Ex. 20:3).

The law, then, at once proved man a transgressor, and justly called for the execution of the sentence of death; accordingly we are told, that

there fell of the people that day about three thousand men (Ex. 32:28).

The subsequent history of those under the law was very similar, consisting chiefly of a succession of rebellions and judgments, so that instead of life and righteousness coming by the law, it wrought condemnation and death; no one was justified by it, but every one proved guilty. The demands of the law served to show what was in man, as Paul said,

I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet {Rom. 7:7}.

Thus, holy, just, and good as the law was, it proved an insufficient instrument to meet man's necessity, by reason of the weak and corrupt character of the flesh. A man might be a most efficient sculptor; but if the marble was not able to bear the touches of the chisel, the work would be very imperfect. Another man might be an elegant writer, but the paper and ink might be most unfit for him to carry out his design. Every touch of the sculptor's chisel, and every stroke of the artist's pen, would thus only show the worthlessness of the marble, and the inferior quality of the paper. So man, shapen in iniquity, and by nature a child of wrath, with a heart alienated from God, when tried by the standard of God's holy law, is made manifest as coming short, and

found wanting {Dan. 5:27}.

Therefore,
saith the apostle,
by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin {Rom. 3:20}.

No persons, therefore, were saved by the law. Even those who lived under the law were saved by grace; for instance,

David describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom, the Lord will not impute sin {see Rom. 4:6-8}.

The Lord Jesus was the only law-fulfiller; He obeyed every jot and tittle of it; but we have all sinned, and become subject to the wrath of God. The law could only make sin known, but could not put sin away.

The blindness and ignorance of the human heart is seen in the readiness with which men put themselves under law. Though the trials the children of Israel had experienced after they left Egypt had so proved their weakness, and brought out such murmuring, yet directly the law was given, notwithstanding the dreadful terrors of Sinai, they unhesitatingly covenanted to fulfil all its demands, and said,

All the words which Jehovah hath said will we do {Ex. 24:3}.

It was an easy thing to say this; but, alas! their subsequent history proved them to be

a disobedient and gainsaying people {Rom. 10:21}.

And is unregenerate man less so now? Is he not the same still? Hath the Ethiopian changed his skin, or the leopard his spots? Has fallen man changed his own heart, or proved himself otherwise than a breaker of God's law? Where is the man that can say, I have loved the Lord my God with all my heart, and with all my

soul, and with all my strength, and with all my mind, and my neighbour as myself? Oh, it is well to see what the law is, and what its workings have always been; for perhaps, the deadliest cup of poison ever put into the hands of sinners is a mixture of law and gospel, calculated to deceive, because it is truth perverted, and to leave the soul in the fatal snare of being neither consciously guilty nor pardoned -- neither a sinner nor a saint; thus, blinded by tradition and mere nominal religion, they hasten onward to the great white throne to be judged every man according to their works, where they will, when too late, prove that

as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse
{Gal. 3:10}.

How very solemn is this!

3. WHAT IS GRACE? --

God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, &c. {Rom. 8:3-5}.

Grace is the wondrous love of God in saving man, when a sinner, by the death of His only-begotten Son. Man had been responsible for fulfilling the law, and man must obey; man had sinned, and man must be made a curse; therefore the Son of God became man. God sent forth His Son made of a woman, not in sinful flesh, but in the likeness of sinful flesh; thus the holy and just One could fulfil and suffer, in the stead of the unjust and unholy, so as to bring us to God. Thus the grace of God brings salvation to the chief of sinners. Sin having been condemned in the flesh by the cross, God can justly pardon the sinner; and the Righteous One having fully obeyed unto death for us, we are

made the righteousness of God in Him {2 Cor. 5:21}.

Thus we see that grace was manifested in the cross, by God condemning our sin in His own Son, and making us righteous in Him whom He raised from the dead, thus doing what the law could not do. The work of Christ's cross, then, is the ground of our peace and confidence in God. It is in the cross we see that God is the God of all grace, and that Christ's death is the ground of our life and peace.

"From the cross our hope we draw,
'Tis the sinner's sure resource;
Jesus magnified the law,
Jesus bore its awful curse;
What a joyful truth this is!
Oh, how full of hope it is!"

The grace of God in Christ exactly meets the sinner's necessities. It needs a sinner to display itself upon. A spotless holy angel before the throne may be the subject of Jehovah's love, but cannot taste that the Lord is gracious; it is for man, sinful, rebellious man, that the throne of grace is established. Other creatures of God will behold its wonders, but man realizes eternal redemption through the blood of the Lamb.

"For man, O miracle of grace!
For man the Savior bled!"

With regard to the effects of the grace of God on our souls, eternity itself will only be long enough to unfold; but suffice it to

say at present, that grace, not law, gives life and peace, and produces godly walk and conduct. Grace brings life to the dead in trespasses and sins:

I am come,
said Jesus,

that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly {John 10:10}.

Or, as elsewhere expressed,

None eye pitied thee, . . . to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out, . . . to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, LIVE; yea, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, LIVE {Ezek. 16:5, 6}!

It is life, everlasting life, the soul receives, not by doing, but by believing; not as a future expectation, but as a present blessing:

He that believeth on me hath everlasting life {John 6:47};
Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day {John 6:54}.

This life is Christ in us, and we in Him:

He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in Him {John 6:56}.

As we have before seen, grace, not law, is also the sole ground of peace with God; for He hath made peace through the blood of His cross. Hence the order of the apostolic writings is not peace and grace, but grace and peace --

grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied {1 Pet. 1:2}.

Those only have the enjoyment of peace with God who are looking simply as the ground of it to the grace of God to us in the death and resurrection of Christ. Many sincere souls have not peace, because they are looking within for it instead of to Christ. Believing the grace of God, we also bring forth the blessed fruits of righteousness, and are led by the Spirit to be imitators of Christ; hence the righteousness of the law (not the law as law, but the righteousness of the law) is fulfilled in us; and more too, because, in following Christ, we go further than the law, though not under it as law. The practical Christian does not break the law; he loves and serves both God and his neighbour. He also follows Jesus inside the rent vail, and worships the Father as standing in grace, and accepted in the Son of His love. He claims not an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth; but returns blessing for cursing, and loves his enemies. Thus, more than the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk after the Spirit; for their aim is to exalt Christ, and follow Him who has redeemed them with His own blood, fulfilled the law for them, delivered them from condemnation, and given them eternal life.

"Rebels, we broke our Maker's laws;
He from the threatening set us free --
Bore the full vengeance on the cross,
And nailed the curses to the tree."

Besides this, we have a higher character of righteousness than if we had perfectly obeyed the law, because Christ Himself is our

righteousness -- He is made of God unto us righteousness. It is more than legal righteousness imputed to us -- it is Divine --

the righteousness which is of God by faith {Phil. 3:9};

thus giving us a standing of completeness before God, a nearness to Himself, that nothing could have given but the sovereign grace of God.

4. Let us now notice some POINTS OF CONTRAST BETWEEN THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL.

(1) The law kept persons at a distance from God. At Sinai, the people were commanded

not to go up, or touch the borders of it; whosoever toucheth the mount shall be surely put to death {see Ex. 19:12}.

The gospel is a message of

good tidings of great joy {Luke 2:10};

it preaches

forgiveness of sins {Eph. 1:7},

invites men

to come and take the water of life freely {see Rev. 22:17},

and brings the far off nigh to God in Christ, and through His blood.

(2) The law said, Do and live --

this do, and thou shalt live {Luke 10:28};

the gospel says, Believe and live;

I give unto them eternal life {John 10:28}.

(3) The law demanded righteousness from man to God in the way of works; the gospel brings righteousness from God to man in the way of faith.

(4) The law required man to love God perfectly; the gospel proclaims God's

perfect love {1 John 4:18}

to man in his guilt and ruin.

God commendeth His love toward us; in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us {Rom. 5:8}.

(5) The law spoke of remembrance of sins without remission; the gospel gives full remission without any remembrance.

Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more {Heb. 8:12}.

(6) The law made nothing perfect; the gospel declares that Christ has,

by one offering, . . . perfected for ever them that are sanctified {Heb. 10:14}.

We might enlarge, but this is enough to show how wide the contrast is between law and grace, and how important it is to

rightly divide the word of truth {see 2 Tim. 2:15}.

5. In applying the points we have considered, we may notice, first, a class of persons who, for lack of clear gospel light, have

not peace. They see that the law of ten commandments is of God: *they put themselves under it*, and acknowledge its just claims upon them; they also own that God should be worshipped, and His ordinances attended to. They are conscious of having sinned, but hope, by redoubling their efforts, to attain to some fitness for God. Sometimes they are well pleased with their progress, and at other times the sense of guilt almost overwhelms them. Endeavouring to come up to an imaginary standard of holiness, they live somewhere between hope and despair, only they are astonished that others can speak with confidence of their peace with God and acceptance in Christ. Dear reader! if such is your experience, allow me to say, that you do right in acknowledging the law, and all its stern demands; but it is better to confess your guilt as a transgressor, than go on trying to patch up the old garment. Oh, look at once to Jesus who was crucified; behold Him as the Substitute which God provided to fulfil the law, to bear all its penalties, and give you an everlasting righteousness, in which you can stand justified from all things before Him. You need not hesitate, for God has given you free permission to come; because He says,

Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth {Rom. 10:4}.

Thus renouncing your own righteousness, and simply believing what God has done in Christ, you will have peace with God, and will be able to say --

"How long beneath the law I lay,
In bondage and distress!
I toiled the precepts to obey,
But toiled without success.

"To see the law by Christ fulfilled,
And hear His pardoning voice,
Changes a slave into a child,
And duty into choice."

There is another class of persons who have known peace, and once tasted the blessed liberty of the gospel, but they did not know the deep importance of trying everything by the Scriptures. At length they were spoiled by the traditions of men, and were persuaded to consider it necessary to add something to the finished work of Christ, by way of making their salvation more secure; which they little suspected overturned the great doctrine of justification by faith, and struck at the root of true Christian peace and joy. At last, prayer became irksome, the Scriptures lost their interest, their sense of the liberty of the gospel declined, and, instead of quiet confidence, bondage, perplexity, and fear possessed them, until they doubted their interest in Christ altogether. They departed from the simplicity of Christ, made a law of something, and got under it, though it might not have been exactly the law of Moses. This was the Galatian error, a type, we fear, of a widespread evil in the present day, when many, instead of growing in grace, have turned from the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free, and become entangled again with the yoke of bondage. If any who read these pages feel that this describes their case, we earnestly exhort you to turn at once to God, acknowledge your folly to Him, and earnestly pray that, by

the power of the Holy Ghost, you may have Christ so revealed to you, through the Scriptures, in all His personal glory, fulness, fitness, and offices, as to draw your soul out after Him, and make you so realize the perpetual efficacy of His finished and all-prevailing work, as to give you renewed rest and peace, and fill you with abhorrence at having thought of adding ordinances, or anything else, to make your salvation more secure.

There are others -- alas! how many -- who seem not exercised either about the law or the gospel. Their thoughts and ways have no reference to God. They are without God; therefore they speak and act as if there were no God, and are consequently alike indifferent about His holy law and His gracious gospel. The world, either in reference to its business, cares, or pleasures, is the all-engrossing topic of conversation, and the great attraction of their hearts; and the elevation of man, instead of God, one of the most powerful means of giving energy and force to their abilities. However, the time is drawing near when Christ Himself will be revealed, as the only Potentate, to whom everything must be brought into subjection; when all those who now despise His laws, and reject His blessed gospel, though perhaps prospering in the world, will be made to feel that He who once died on Calvary's cross is Lord of all; for

the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the
haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the Lord alone
shall be exalted in that day {Isa. 2:17}.

Now Christ calls chief sinners, and cleanses the blackest, foulest sins with His precious blood; but then He will judge righteously, and put all enemies under His feet. May God the Holy Ghost solemnly impress these truths on many hearts!

Crossing the Jordan

And Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither and hear the words of the LORD your God. And Joshua said, Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Hivites, and the Perizzites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests that bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand upon an heap. And it came to pass, when the people removed from their tents, to pass over Jordan, and the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people; and as they that bare the ark were come unto Jordan, and the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped in the brim of the water, (for Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest,) that the waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon an heap very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down toward the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off: and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan (Josh. 3:9-17).

The scene here described was Israel's last trial in the wilderness. For forty years they had journeyed through the desert; but their last experience, like the first, only proved their own helplessness and entire inability to enter the land by their own works. The green fields and luxuriant hills of the

land flowing with milk and honey {Ex. 3:8, 17; 13:5}

were now in sight, but they could not enter in. The overflowing Jordan rolled before them, and threatened to swallow up with death any who ventured in nature's strength to cross it. But the point was so conclusive, that we are not told that any one even proposed it; but Joshua and all the hosts of Israel are presented to us as standing on the wilderness side of Jordan's overflowing banks in conscious helplessness, and without hope, so far as their own resources were concerned. They again had to find that the law could not bring them into the land, and this lesson they had often bitterly to prove in their experience, though, like ourselves, they were very slow to learn it. It is remarkable how prominently this is brought out at the close of their wilderness course. Only about a year before the scene we are contemplating, those who had so willingly placed themselves under the law, the terms of which were,

This do, and thou shalt live {Luke 10:28},

were dying in all directions from the fiery serpent's bite, which not only shows us that they had not kept the law, but that they were so disobedient as to bring upon themselves the special judgment of God; so that, instead of having life as the fruit of obedience, deliverance from death could only come to them in the way of grace -- the free gift of God. Just before this, the venerable lawgiver, notwithstanding all his previous meekness and faithfulness, so grievously dishonored the Lord, that he could not be allowed to bring the congregation of Israel into the land. (See Num. 20 and 21) Thus we see that the law could neither give them life nor righteousness, but was the ministration of condemnation and death, and that in its working it served to prove the New Testament doctrines,

By the law is the knowledge of sin,
and,

By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight
{Rom. 3:20}.

And how blessed it is to contemplate that all these failures of man were only occasions for bringing out, in types and shadows, the resources of God's abounding grace, as the realities were afterwards so wondrously manifested in the sufferings, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ! How important, also, it is to notice, in the history of those under the law, that whatever blessing they had, it came to them, not as the fruit of their own worthiness, but only in the way of Divine mercy! If you see them in Egyptian bondage, or exposed to the destroying angel's sword, it is God that shelters and delivers them through the blood of the lamb. When Pharaoh and his host hotly pursued them to the borders of the Red Sea, it was God that wrought deliverance for them, by dividing the waves and heaping them up in a liquid wall, thus bringing them through as on dry land, and cutting off their enemies in judgment. See them again with parched lips murmuring beside Marah's waters; and it was God who directed them to that mystic tree which could make the bitterest water sweet. See them, also, hungry in the barren wilderness, or burning with thirst in a land of drought; and it was God that rained down daily bread from heaven to feed them, and caused the flinty rock to pour forth rivers of water to refresh them. It was God who led them by the right way; it was God who brought the pillar of cloud over them to screen them from the sun's burning rays, and caused the pillar of fire to light up the darkness of the night watches. See them again suffering the due reward of their sins from the fiery serpent's bite; and it was God that brought life to them through the serpent of brass lifted up. See their leader deservedly cut off through transgression; and it was God who raised up Joshua to successfully lead them through every obstacle; and lead them into their promised inheritance. Lastly, see them on Jordan's bank, afresh learning the lesson of being

without strength {Rom. 5:6};

and it is God, the living God, against whom they had so often sinned, that in sovereign grace made a way for them through the river of judgment, and brought them into their long-desired land. All these facts read to us, as they should have to Israel, the happy lessons, that we are saved and blessed solely on the ground of mercy, and

not by works of righteousness which we have done {Titus 3:5}.

“Grace, we sing, God’s grace through Jesus;
 Grace, the spring of peace to man;
 Grace, that from each sorrow frees us;
 Grace, too high for thought to scan;
 Grace, the theme of God’s own love,
 Grace, the theme all themes above.”

In order to get a clear understanding of the instruction of Israel’s crossing the Jordan, we must endeavour to divest ourselves of the commonly received idea, that it is a type of the Christian’s experience in the article of death. The mistake has most likely arisen from not seeing that the gospel brings to us a present salvation, and that each believer is spoken of in the Scriptures as one who

HATH everlasting life,
 and

is passed from death unto life {John 5:24}.

From not seeing this, some think of death as before them instead of behind them, and that which they have

passed from.

Hence some speak of daily “dipping their foot in Jordan,” that is, being daily exercised about death. A friend of mine once visited a sick Christian, who was much distressed about how she could “cross the Jordan”; and we have heard of others who commonly speak of death as “crossing the Jordan.” The fact is, that we who believe are in Christ delivered from death, and made partakers of a risen life, by the death and resurrection of Christ; the blood of Jesus has removed the sting of death, and though we may fall asleep in Jesus, it is not death, strictly speaking; for Jesus said,

It a man keep my saying, he shall never see death {John 8:51}.

That Israel crossing the Jordan cannot refer to this is clear, because when they crossed the river they began to fight; whereas, when we

sleep in Jesus {1 Thess. 4:14},

all our fighting is over; we put off our battle garments for ever; we exchange an helmet for a crown, and our conflict for rest.

But what does this scene at Jordan mean? It means that deliverance from death, and that spiritual resurrection which we have now, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Our state by nature is that of being dead in trespasses and sins -- children of wrath -- exposed to death and judgment. But God, in marvelous grace, quickens or makes alive dead ones, and those who are so quickened are made nigh to God, delivered from death, and the wrath to come; they have been quickened together, raised up together, and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Israel’s crossing the Jordan, therefore, sets before us the blessed doctrine, that God’s children have died with Christ, have been buried with Christ, are risen with Christ, and made sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Thus we are, as to position, in heavenly places, while actually we are walking in an evil world. But let us now look more particularly at the Scripture before us.

1. ISRAEL’S STATE, as we have before noticed, was one of helplessness. Moreover, the fear of death filled their minds; for Jordan with overflowing banks was between them and the promised land. They could not see how they could enter into their much-desired inheritance. And is not this exactly what all feel whose consciences are roused to consider their eternal state? They cannot think of heaven, and glory, and fulness of joy, without feeling that they are exposed to death; and they seem to view glory afar off, and know not how to reach it. Their consciences accuse them of sin against God, and they fear death as the consequence --

The wages of sin is death {Rom. 6:23}.

They recoil from death, and tremble at its expectation. A death-bed scene makes them quiver, because they dread it for themselves. No one can write or speak on such a solemn subject without the greatest seriousness; yet if the truth of God assures me that Christ has abolished death, and delivered me from it, ought I not to be at peace? Death abases man’s pride, it prostrates in the dust earth’s most honored sons, it brings down man’s loftiest thoughts, and hurls into oblivion all his vain pretensions. Man’s inventions and appliances are made to meet almost every other requirement; but in regard to “the king of terrors,” as he calls death, he is obliged to content himself with perfuming or smoothing a dying pillow, and garnishing the grave; but death he must bow to -- death Christ only has overcome. It is death and judgment that men dread, because conscience accuses; therefore they are without God, and have no hope in the world. Of course, Satan seeks to fill the eye and heart of men with

the pleasures of sin {Heb. 11:25};

but a Divinely-convicted soul cannot rest until he is delivered from the fear of death, and enabled to sing --

“My sin is gone -- my fears are o’er --
 I shun God’s presence now no more;
 He sits upon a throne of grace;
 He bids me boldly seek His face;
 Sprinkled upon the throne of God,
 I see that rich atoning blood!”

2. Now look at GOD’S WAY OF DELIVERANCE. God showed by this that He could bring His people through death and into resurrection. It is the voice of Jesus in Old Testament times that here says,

I am the resurrection, and the life {John 11:25}.

Joshua said unto the children of Israel,

Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God. . .
 . . Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among, you.
 . . . Behold, the ark of the covenant of the God of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan. Now therefore take you twelve men out of the tribes of Israel, out of every tribe a man. And it shall come to pass, that as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests . . . shall rest in the waters of Jordan, that the waters of Jordan shall be cut off from the waters that come down from above; and they shall stand up upon an heap {Josh. 3:9-13}.

Thus we see that the waters of judgment fled before the ark of the covenant,

a new and living way {Heb. 10:20}

was made for the people, and they were delivered from death and its terrors, and at once enabled to enter the land. It was all of God -- His wisdom, His power, His grace; and is a vivid illustration of the well known text,

By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast {Eph. 2:8, 9}.

On referring to the construction of the ark in Ex. 25, and its use as recorded in Num. 10:33, we cannot fail to recognize that Christ is prefigured by it. As the ark of the covenant

going before into Jordan, and resting in the waters of Jordan {see Josh. 3:11, 13},

made the way for Israel to enter the land, so it is by Jesus going into death that

He destroyed death, ¹³and him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage {see Heb. 2:14, 15}.

Does not this clearly show that we have deliverance from death only by the death of Christ? Does it not magnify the work of the cross, and plainly point us to Christ crucified as

the way, the truth, and the life {John 14:6}?

Does it not tell us that there is

none other name under heaven whereby we can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ {see Acts 4:10, 12}?

Does not the Holy Ghost here teach us that we have died with Christ, by His having died for us? And do not our souls cry out while contemplating the cross of Christ, and His triumphant resurrection,

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.
But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ {1 Cor. 15:55, 56}.

Oh, how blessed is the remembrance of the fact, that the holy and spotless Jesus went into the cold waters of death for us, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. It is the death of Christ alone that removes the sting of death from us, and enables us to find access with confidence into God's presence. We know that, when Christ died; the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, to show us that through His death every hindrance was removed to the believer's coming into the presence of God.

3. CROSSING THE JORDAN we may look upon as the action of faith on God's way of deliverance. Believing that the living God had made this way, this living way, into the land, they

all passed clean over {see Josh. 3:17}.

Their eyes rested on the ark in the river for them, and the wondrous power of that ordinance in delivering from the waters of

death, and opening the way into the land. They beheld the liquid wall on the one hand, that the waters failed on the other,

the ark of the covenant {Josh. 3:17}

being in the midst, and a straight path made for them to pass over dry shod. Thus they were inspired with confidence, all fear and doubt were removed, and onward they went according to the word of the Lord, and quickly planted their feet upon their promised inheritance, the land flowing with milk and honey. And so it is now. It is a believing view of the death of Christ, the knowledge of His having died for us -- of the curse, and wrath, and death, which we deserved, having fallen on Him instead of us -- that He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification -- thus seeing the wondrous love of God in providing such a Savior, and accomplishing such a work for us, that fills us with confidence, delivers us from guilt and fear, and enables us to find rest and peace in the holiest of all, in the presence of God Himself. Knowing that the risen Jesus has entered into heaven itself with His own blood, now to appear before the face of God for us, we follow Him in there by faith, and know our blessed liberty as blood-washed worshipers in His presence. Therefore in Christ, and by His blood, we who were once afar off are made nigh; and we, who were once dead in sins, have been quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Our standing, then, is heavenly, we are brought into the heavenlies in Christ, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places; death is behind us, glory before us, and our expectation is to bear the heavenly image; heaven is our home.

Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body {Phil. 3:20, 21}.

Our worship therefore is heavenly; we come boldly to

the throne of grace {Heb. 4:16},

having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; and, as a heavenly people,

risen with Christ {Col. 3:1},

we are exhorted to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God; to set our

affection on things above, not on things on the earth {Col. 3:2},

because our

life is hid with Christ in God {Col. 3:3}.

It is most important for the believer to see that he not only has forgiveness of sins, but that he is risen with Christ, and belongs to the heavenlies; that he is a partaker of the heavenly calling, a heaven-born, heaven-bound son, having life, resurrection-life, and, by the Holy Ghost, union with the glorified Son of God -- a member of Christ's body, of His flesh and of His bones. Not like the earthly people of Israel, who were called from Egypt to an earthly land of promise; but called from a state of death in trespasses and sins to heavenly places -- an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The blood of our sacrifice not sprinkled again and again on a brazen altar, but

13. {This is not accurate: ". . . in like manner, took part in the same, that through death, he might annul him who has the might of death." 1 Cor 15:26 tells us *when* death will be destroyed.}

presented once and for ever in heaven itself. Not having a dying priest to minister in an earthly sanctuary, but having a priest for ever in heaven to make intercession for us. Thus we are not of the world, but knowing its doom, and that the earth and all things therein will be burned up, we find our peace and blessing in heaven, inside the veil, and that

our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ {1 John 1:3}.

These things, known in the soul by the teaching of the Holy Ghost as God's eternal truth, answer a thousand perplexing questions, and plainly mark out for us a path of heavenly-mindedness in a self-seeking, Christ-rejecting world.

4. Lastly, let us look at ISRAEL IN THE LAND. We are repeatedly told that they clean passed over, and the waters again returned to their place as before, which facts speak solemn and comforting lessons to our hearts. The people now lived in the promised land. God gave it to them, and brought them into it dry shod. They were no longer in the desert of drought and barrenness, but in the land flowing with milk and honey, where grapes and pomegranates abounded. The way which God brought them was never to be forgotten; therefore they were to

take twelve stones out of the middle of Jordan, and carry them over with them into the place where they lodged, for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever . . . and they are there unto this day {Josh. 4:3-8}

so that ages and generations to come should know the exceeding goodness of God to them. (Compare Josh. 4:4-24 with Eph. 2:7.) And so in ages to come the Church shall be to the praise and glory of God, for His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. We shall ever remember the cross. It is the death of Christ we specially remember in the Lord's Supper -- we

shew the Lord's death till He come {1 Cor. 11:26}.

We do not keep the Lord's supper in order to be saved, but we do it in remembrance of Him, by whose stripes we are healed, by whose death we have life.

We may next notice that the people of Israel, when in the land, were circumcised according to the Lord's command. This teaches us that a realization of our heavenly calling and standing in Christ will be connected with self-judgment, and practically putting off the old man and his deeds; we shall reckon ourselves to have died unto sin, and to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ. Hence heavenly worship and rejoicing in Christ Jesus will be associated with having no confidence in the flesh. Circumcision was not practised in the wilderness, which shows us typically that trials and necessities do not give us power over self; hence those Christians who are pressed down with the cares and difficulties of the way will have little power to keep under the flesh; whereas those who know the portion which

perfect love {1 John 4:18}

has given them in a risen and ascended Savior will judge the flesh to be unfit for God's service, and as unclean in its moral or religious actings as in its grosser workings. We may be assured that abiding in Christ in heavenly places is the secret of true humility.

"The more Thy glory strikes mine eyes,
The humbler I shall lie;
For while I sink, my joys shall rise
Immeasurably high."

The people also kept the passover; and oh, with what rejoicing they must have celebrated it! (Josh. 5:10). They must have valued the blood of the lamb more than ever, when they remembered where it had brought them, as well as what it had delivered them from. And who estimates the redeeming love of God, and the unutterable preciousness of the blood of Christ, like those who know it, as not only blotting out their sin, but as enabling them to enter with boldness into the holiest of all!

We next notice that the manna ceased, and

the people did eat of the old corn in the land (see Josh. 5:11, 12).

This is very significant. In days of wilderness experience, the people were fed by that which came down from heaven; but when in the land they fed and lived upon that which sprung up from the corn of wheat that died. So now those who may be trusting in the blood of the Lamb, who have merely a wilderness experience, will be sustained by the limited, though most blessed, thought of Christ having descended; but those who know their full deliverance from death, and standing in life and righteousness in heavenly places in Christ, find their joy and strength in the blessed knowledge, that

He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things {Eph. 4:10}.

They live on resurrection food, on Christ risen, Christ exalted, Christ the abolisher of death, Christ crowned with glory and honor, Christ our Lamb and Priest now in the presence of God for us, Christ our Lord, Head, righteousness, and life, Christ soon coming to take us unto Himself, that where He is, there we may be also.

But though God gave them the land and brought them there, they had to fight the fight of faith to keep it. So we have to

put on the whole armour of God {Eph. 6:11}

to maintain the consciousness and joy of our heavenly standing. Satan and his host only consult to cast us down from our excellency, and we need divine strength, and divine armour, to wrestle with principalities and powers, to enable us to maintain in our soul's our conscious standing in the blessing God has given us and brought us into in Christ Jesus in heavenly places.

May the Lord bless His own truth!

Now Made Nigh; Or, What the Christian Was, and What He Is

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

In reading the word of God, it is always important to see to whom each particular portion is addressed. For instance, this epistle was not addressed to the inhabitants of Ephesus generally, but to the saints and faithful brethren -- those who had known and believed the love that God hath to us; those among the Ephesians who had, through faith in the Lord Jesus, been brought nigh to God -- had passed from death unto life. The apostle was inspired by the Holy Ghost to address them in the remembrance of what they had been, as well as to instruct them as to the character of their present standing and blessing as redeemed and accepted in the Beloved.

We do not become Christians by being born of Christian parents, or because our lot has been cast in what is called a Christian country, or because we have been religiously educated, or by attending to any outward ordinances, or by being associated with any who are truly saints of God. No; we only become Christians by having to do with Christ and His atoning blood. Whatever may have been our previous history or character, we are far from God, and enemies to God, till we are reconciled to God by the death His Son. If I were asked to give, in a few words of Scripture, the true definition of what a Christian is, I do not think I could give a better reply than we find in the latter part of this verse, viz., one who *was*

far off
but *is now* in Christ
made nigh {Eph. 2:13}
to God by His blood.

We find in this verse reference made to what the state of these persons was before they received the gospel, their present standing and blessing, and also the ground of their being so. Let us look a little at each of these points.

1. WHAT THEY WERE --

far off.

As fallen creatures in Adam, men are naturally found in a place of distance from God. After sin entered, Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And we see also in Cain their son, that he *went out* from the presence of the Lord, and sought to gratify himself by building a city, &c. And so it is now; man's birth-condition, his habits and educational pursuits, are all at a distance from God; he still tries to hide himself from God's presence, and to be happy, if he can,

afar off {Eph. 2:17}.

These Ephesians, however, though belonging to a highly-polished city, were Gentiles, not having any of the privileges, or even the measure of knowledge, that the Jews had; they were heathens, idolaters, taken up only with this present evil world -- the fashions

of the world, the honors of the world, its wealth, patronage, and advancement, filled their hearts. From the rude lusts of the flesh, to the more refined desires of the mind, they were shaping their course according to the dictates of Satan, the prince of this world. They knew of nothing higher than pleasing themselves, gratifying their own wills and inclinations; in a word, to eat, drink, and sleep, as if there were no God. They might have ranked among the most civilized, polished, and benevolent of the age; they might have been outwardly more moral and orderly than their neighbours; still they were without God, and having no hope in the world. They were in the world, and of the world, which lieth in the wicked one, and therefore far off from God.

Such was the character of the world in the days of the apostle, and such is the world now. Such was the state of the Ephesians then, and such is the state of many now. Nothing can be more distinct than the spirit of the world, and the spirit of true Christianity. The moving principle of the world is the endeavour to be happy, apart from God and the Savior -- far off; the spirit of true Christianity leads us to be happy only in God's presence, and that which honors Him. The principles of the world, whether their tendencies are moral or immoral, are always outside God's presence. Those who are of the world weigh not their motives and actions before God; they know not His love; therefore they live not for His glory. The advancement of man's interest, the cultivation of human intellect, and the exaltation of natural abilities, with the vain endeavour to find rest and satisfaction far from God and Christ, is what the world is mostly made up of. Is it not so? Turn where we may, do we not find men busily seeking satisfaction apart from God? some in pleasure, others in science, fame, the accumulation of wealth, or other forms of self-indulgence. Such, I say, is the world; and I dwell upon it, because few appear to see that the world, whether in its rude or polished phase, is equally that which is far from God.

Moreover, with all the outward glitter, such have within them a secret dread of God's presence; like Adam, they may truthfully say,

I was afraid, . . . and I hid myself {Gen. 3:10}.

That which keeps men

far off

is the dread of being near to God. Such is the wicked character of sin, that the carnal mind is not only at enmity and rebellion against God, but it leads men to shrink away from the light of His presence: hence they fear death, not because of the painful moment of separation between soul and body, but because of the dread of appearing before the Majesty of heaven. They fear judgment, because they fear being banished into outer darkness. They have no peace, because they know not the virtue of that

precious blood which cleanses from all sin; and they try to banish these thoughts from their minds, by seeking a sphere for their energies and amusements outside the presence of God. It was here the Ephesians were when the gospel reached them; they were dead in trespasses and sins, afar off, having no hope, and without God in the world; and such is the state of many now.

2. Let us now consider what they were when the apostle addressed this epistle to them. He tells them that they are now

in Christ Jesus,

and

made nigh {Eph. 2:13}.

In Christ Jesus;

that is, no longer regarded by God in a state of death as connected with Adam, but as having passed from death unto life. As Noah formerly entered into the ark, as the only place of safety from the coming judgments, so they had taken refuge in Christ Jesus; and as Noah was shut into the ark by God, so such are preserved *in* Christ Jesus. They had life and righteousness *in* Christ, and union with Christ, having been quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. This was their present portion --

now in Christ Jesus {Eph. 2:13}.

Under no condemnation, because they were in Christ Jesus; having eternal life, because in Christ Jesus; united to Him by the Holy Ghost, who is on the other side of death; risen with Christ, and seated in Him in the heavenlies. Such is the standing and security that the God of grace has given us in Christ Jesus. They were thus made nigh in Christ, as well as through His blood. How vast the change! Such no longer dread God's presence, but love it supremely. They do not fear death, but know, through Christ, victory over it. They do not tremble at the thought of judgment, because they know that Christ endured the judgment and penalty their sins had merited. God Himself is their spring of life and peace; they are only truly happy when near Him.

Their former enmity against God has been subdued by His redeeming love. The hardness of their hearts has been melted by the contemplation of Immanuel's cross, and their self-will and self-love have been overcome by the exceeding riches of the grace of God in Christ. They know that they are made nigh to God.

Their nearness to God is one of the most perfect friendship. It is thus their privilege to seek His counsel in every difficulty, to trust in Him at all times, to reckon upon His help in every adversity, and to bring them through every danger. This nearness to God is one of the dearest and tenderest relationships -- that of children.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God {1 John 3:2}.

So that we may come before God as our Father, and count upon His care over us, His providential kindness, His paternal sympathy, His watchful eye, His almighty arm. It is our privilege to appeal to His fatherly heart for all we require, under all circumstances, whether temporal or spiritual; for

as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust {Psa. 103:13, 14}.

We are a heavenly people of the

household of God {Eph. 2:19},

and are called to serve and honor Him in all the filial nearness and devotedness of sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

But more than this, we are made nigh to God as worshipers. We are not now afraid to come near the presence of the Almighty, but have liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; there to present our spiritual sacrifices as a royal and holy priesthood, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

And all this our God has done for us in Christ. What love! Is Christ near to God? so am I, for I am in Him, Is Christ living for evermore? so am I. Is Christ righteous? so am I; for in Him, and through His blood, I am made nigh to God. What matchless grace! Oh for a believing heart fully to welcome all these ways of our God toward us, that instead of brooding over ourselves with gloom and sorrow, we may find our hearts lifted high, and more and more expanded by the heights and depths of God's free and abundant love to us in Christ Jesus.

"By nature and by practice far,

How very far, from God!

Yet now by grace brought nigh to Him,

Through faith in Jesus' blood.

"So nigh, so very nigh to God,

Nearer I cannot be;

For in the person of His Son

I am as near as He.

"So dear, so very dear to God,

More dear I cannot be;

The love wherewith He loves His Son --

Such is His love to me."

3. THE GROUND OF ALL THIS BLESSING is the blood of Christ -- made nigh by the blood of Christ {Eph. 2:13}.

Not our efforts, our devotedness, our attainments, but the blood of Christ. It is something already done -- we may not know it, may fail in the true apprehension of it, may not enjoy it, nevertheless it is done --

ARE made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Without the death of the Son of God, we must for ever have remained far off from Him, still in our sins and guilt, for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul; and Jesus taught the absolute necessity of His death, for He said,

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit {John 12:24}.

It is not, then, the incarnation of Christ, the life of Christ, or the example of Christ, but the death of Christ, the cross of Christ, the blood of Christ, that cleanses our guilty consciences, and makes us feel happy in God's presence. It is Christ crucified that is the only peaceful meeting-place between God and the sinner. There God shows sinners how much He loves them. There God brings

salvation to the lost. There God opened an all-cleansing fountain for sin and uncleanness. There God magnified His own holiness and justice, and manifested the exceeding riches of His grace to unholy men; and now in Christ Jesus, by His blood, God has made all that believe to stand in everlasting nearness to Himself.

We have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, because God made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us. Our sins were laid upon Him, and He was made a curse for us. In this way He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. The wrath of God was thus poured out upon Him instead of us, so that

He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed {Isa. 53:5}.

Hence, on the ground of strictest justice and holiness, God can speak of us as a redeemed people, washed from our sins in the blood of Jesus, and that our sins and iniquities He will remember no more. The alone ground, therefore, of forgiveness of sins is not our works, our experience, our frames, or our feelings, but the blood of Christ; for without the shedding of blood is no remission; and the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Nothing therefore relieves man's guilt and fears, or removes the burden from the conscience, or speaks peace to a sin-convicted soul, but

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

O my soul, I charge thee ever to remember that it is alone by the blood of the cross that thy scarlet sins have been purged, and that thou art whiter than snow!

“Great God of wonders! all Thy ways
Display Thine attributes Divine;
But the fair glories of Thy GRACE
Beyond Thine other wonders shine.
Who is a pardoning God like Thee?
Or who has grace so rich and free?”

We are also justified by the blood --

being now justified by His blood (Rom. 5:9).

The cross of Christ not only speaks to us of sins being judged and put away, but it also shows us One who was perfectly obedient, who surrendered His whole self to the will of God, wholly consecrated Himself to Him, was

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross {Phil. 2:8}.

Thus the work of Christ Jesus was infinitely meritorious in God's sight; for there a whole burnt-offering was presented to God, by which we could stand accepted and righteous in all the perfectness of the offering for ever. Jesus was thus accepted for us, and we are made accepted in Him. It is by the death of Christ that we are reconciled to God, and in Him we are

made the righteousness of God {2 Cor. 5:21}.

For while that blood by which Jesus entered into heaven itself speaks to us of sins for ever put away, it also tells us of an everlasting worthiness, or righteousness, in which His people stand accepted and complete, even in Him who is risen from the dead, and the Head of all principality and power.

We are also sanctified by the blood -- consecrated, or set apart for God.

Jesus, . . . that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate {Heb. 13:12}.

As sprinkled with that blood, we are able to serve God as not our own but His, and are thus taught that we are set apart for His service, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved; not in order to be His, but because we are His. The priests of old, after the offering of the sin-offering and burnt-offering, were sprinkled with the blood of the ram of consecration, and anointed with oil, to qualify them for priestly service. The tip of their right ear, and the thumb of their right hand, and the great toe of their right foot, were all marked with blood, to teach us that, because we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus, we are to listen to God's voice, to walk in His ways, and minister in His holy service; that, as an accepted, consecrated, blood-sprinkled, and anointed priesthood, we are set apart to serve God, to worship God, to glorify Him in our bodies and in our spirits, because we are not our own, but His.

It is, then, the precious blood of Christ, as sprinkled on the mercy-seat by our great High Priest, that is our simple way of approaching God at all times: we enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. When we experience a difficulty in entering into God's presence, it is because we have forgotten the blood, unless there be sin on the conscience unconfessed. But drawing near to God through the blood of His beloved Son, believing God's testimony to the value of that blood, and what it has done for us, we can then, in the bright light and glory of His infinitely holy presence, pour out our hearts before Him, praise and magnify the unsearchable riches of Divine love, seek all we need at His hand, and not hesitate to search our hearts, and try our ways before Him, because He witnesses to us there that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

“That rich atoning blood,
Which on the throne we see,
Provides for those who come to God
An all-prevailing plea.”

Well, then, might the apostle say to the believers at Ephesus,

Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ {Eph. 2:13}.

Once they were in the world, and of the world; but now they are not of the world, even as Jesus was not of the world. Once enemies to God, now friends. Once children of disobedience, now children of God. Once afar off, but now in Christ made nigh by His blood.

Oh that God's dear children did know their nearness to God, their standing and completeness in Christ, their privileges, their present blessings, their deliverance from the guilt and power of sin, their rescue from this present evil world, its ways and maxims, by THE BLOOD OF CHRIST!

My reader, where are you at this moment? Are you still living and walking according to the course of this world? Do its pleasures, honors, fashions, and its so-called progress, or its falsely-called science, absorb your heart and mind? We cannot

serve two masters. It must be either God or mammon, Christ or the world; which is it with you? Sure I am that believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified for sinners, will give you peace, and bring you nigh to God. It is vain to look elsewhere; for the God of truth declares that there is salvation in no other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ.

Have You Peace?

Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment (Eccl. 9:7, 8).

Many exercised souls have not peace. We hope that God's Spirit is working with them, yet they have not found peace. If you ask them, they will tell you that they get worse and worse, and find themselves further from peace than ever. They say they can sometimes look to Jesus, but have not peace. Why have they not peace? Because they have not believed that Jesus so completely saves every sinner that comes to Him, that He says,

Go thy way; thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace {see Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50}.

Blessed be His dear name, Jesus still says, Come! Come unto me! He still looks with an eye of pity on poor sinners. He still says,

Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book {Rev. 22:10};

and almost the last of the sayings is,

Let Him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely {Rev. 22:17}.

To the believer He says, Go thy way. Doubt no more. Be happy. Go in peace. Sometimes a sin-burdened soul came to Jesus. One woman cast herself down at His feet in deep sorrow of heart; she so felt her sinfulness, and that Christ was the Savior of such, that big tears rolled down her cheeks, and washed His blessed feet, and she wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thus she came as an unworthy, sinful one to Jesus; and He said to her, You are saved; go in peace! With open arms of love and mercy, He said to a sin-oppressed people,

Come unto me, . . . and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

Some did come, and then He said,

Go in peace Mark 5:34; Luke 7:50}.

The Lord Jesus came to seek and save the lost. He will save; none other can save. If you do not come to Him, you will never find peace. You may go to church or chapel, say prayers, and the like, but these will not give you peace. Jesus is the only peace-maker between God and man, the only peace-giver; hence He is called the Prince of peace. Some of you may think you have peace, because you do not feel particularly unhappy; but it is not so. If you awoke at midnight, and found your bedroom brilliantly illuminated, above any brightness you ever beheld, you would tremble, you would fear and dread, lest the Lord were come, because you have not peace with God. When you place a friend in the grave, and think how soon you may be laid there yourself, you are not happy -- you have not peace. Why? Because you have not come to the Lord Jesus, and been reconciled to God by His death. You have no peace, because you will not come to Jesus. The vilest sinner may come. Publicans and harlots do come, and Jesus washes their crimson sins in His blood, and says to them, Go in peace! Nothing can be more simple. It was not the woman's tears

that we have referred to, nor her humility, nor anything else of her own that saved her. No; she simply came to Jesus as a helpless sinner, and He saved her. Some people are constantly thinking or talking about their sins, and say they are always coming to Christ as miserable sinners; they have not peace, because they do not believe God's word, which says that they are *now justified* by Christ's blood. Other true-hearted people have not peace, because they expect some extraordinary visitation; they say, If I had a particular dream, or heard an angel's voice proclaim that I was saved, I should have peace. But they should not thus speak. Our ears may deceive us; but we have God's word, His unfailing truth, the promise of Him to rest in, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning. He declares that He will save to the uttermost them that come to Him through Christ; and this should be enough. Here is a rock for coming sinners to rest upon, solid ground for peace and happiness; for Go thy way! go in peace! are the words of Jesus now to such. But how fearful is the thought that He will say to others by and by,

Depart from me, ye cursed {Matt. 25:41}!

Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth {Matt. 22:13}.

Now God -- the God of peace -- preaches peace by Jesus Christ. All that He wants of sinners is, that they come to Him about their sins; for He gave His Son to put away our sins with His own blood. The Holy Spirit shews men their sinfulness, and leads them to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified, as the only ground of peace. Come, then, now. Come as sinners, miserable, wretched sinners, and come trusting in the atoning work of Jesus. God has sent His truth, and it has been rejected; His servants have been persecuted and put to death; many of the apostles were martyred; still God saves sinners that come to Him by His beloved Son. Some may say, You must do this good work, or that. But Scripture says salvation is not by works, but by *believing* on Christ Jesus; for God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. Those who thus come to Him are washed in the blood of Jesus, reconciled to God, and able to serve Him acceptably. There must be reconciliation between parties, even if enmity exists only on one side, before there can be acceptable service rendered, or peaceful intercourse known between them. The Queen of this land could not accept the homage and service of a rebel and traitor. No; however much she may wish it, the past transgressions must be first justly dealt with, before such an one would be allowed an audience by her Majesty. How much more the thrice holy God, before whom the heavens are not clean! Oh the blessedness of having to do with the God of peace, whose own arm, instead of being lifted up for our utter destruction, has brought reconciliation, acceptance, and eternal salvation to us!

The first words of these verses,

Go thy way,

have suggested these thoughts. God accepts the person, and therefore his works. He cannot accept the works and not the person; for

the prayer {sacrifice} of the wicked is an abomination in His sight {see Prov. 15:8}.

But those whom God accepts may well rejoice, because He now not only accepts their persons, but also their works --

God now accepteth thy works {Eccl. 9:7}.

There are three points more in this Scripture that I would like to touch a little upon, as the Lord may graciously help.

1. The believer is called to rejoice.
2. To be watchful.
3. To savour of Christ.

1. THE BELIEVER IS CALLED TO REJOICE.

Eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart {Eccl. 9:7}.

He is not to doubt that his sins are forgiven, and that he is accepted in the Beloved, but to be happy in the knowledge of these things. Believing the truth of God, he is assured that he is not condemned -- will not come into judgment, but that he is a child of God -- has passed from death unto life, and will never perish; because Christ has died and rose again, and entered into heaven itself with His own blood. He stands as a pardoned sinner, accepted and born again of the Spirit; therefore God now accepts his works. He is, then, to eat and drink with joy. He is to take up the necessary matters of every-day life with a happy heart, as unto the Lord. He is to rejoice evermore; in everything to give thanks; yea, to rejoice in the Lord alway. This is true Christian experience, what the apostle Peter calls,

Joy unspeakable and full of glory {1 Pet. 1:8}.

But when we find "bread" and "wine" mentioned in Scripture, we may generally be pretty sure that the Holy Spirit is reminding us of Him who said,

I am the bread of life: . . . the bread that I will give is my flesh {John 6:35, 51};

for Christ is the Christian's food. It is broken bread. As we cannot partake of a loaf of bread for our bodily sustenance till it is broken; so we could not eat of Christ, the bread of life, till His body was broken; therefore Jesus said, prior to the cross, the bread that I *will* give. It is the broken body and poured out blood of Christ that is now our bread and wine; and perhaps the greatest blessing we can have, next to salvation, is a good appetite for the flesh and blood of Christ. Nothing can compensate the believer for a lack of this. Christ is our daily bread. No Christ, no food. We are blessed in Christ with all spiritual blessings, and are called to live on Him for constant spiritual supplies. When meditating on the written word, under the Spirit's teaching, we feed on Christ. We know nothing of Christ, but as revealed unto us by the Spirit in the Scriptures.

The words that I speak unto you,

said Jesus,

they are Spirit, and they are life {John 6:63}.

We feed on Christ when we receive His word by faith into our hearts. Hence it is that those who neglect the reading of the Scriptures have barrenness of soul. In this, as in every other thing, Christ hath left us an example. He emptied Himself, and took a servant's form. He lived in continual dependence on the Father; therefore He said,

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me {John 6:57}.

Communion with God, in the person, work, and fulness of Christ, as accepted worshipers, made nigh by His blood, gives true Christian joy. A believer must know something of these things for abiding happiness and joy. So long as he feels outside the veil, not near to God, not in His blessed presence, he will not be happy; but when the blessed Comforter shows him that he is now standing in Christ, inside the veil, cleansed by the blood of Christ, and accepted in Him, with every provision made for the wilderness journey, then it is that he eats his bread with joy, and drinks the soul-cheering wine of the banqueting-house with a merry heart.

How is it that God's dear children do not more rejoice? Because they are not believing the precious words of Christ, not living upon Christ, not feeding on Christ, not drawing out of the fulness of Christ, not apprehending their acceptance and standing in Christ, not abiding in Christ, not dwelling within the veil where Christ our life is, not having communion with God in the flesh and blood of His beloved Son. Hence passing things too much occupy the mind, painful circumstances quickly cast down our spirits, pleasant things easily elate us, and our affections are drawn from those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Oh, my fellow-Christians! let us look away unto Jesus, cleave to the Lord Jesus; let us hold fast our blessed privileges in Him, let us eat our bread with joy, and drink our wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth our works!

2. THE BELIEVER SHOULD BE WATCHFUL.

Let thy garments be always white {Eccl. 9:8}.

The garments of salvation are pure and spotless. The robe of Christ is white and clean. The world through which our wilderness journey lies is unclean and defiling, and our evil flesh is easily acted on by Satan; hence we are admonished to keep our garments unspotted (Jude 23). If our children were attired in white and costly garments, and we sent them to walk along a muddy road, we should doubtless charge them to be careful how they walked, and to be watchful lest they defiled their clothing. So our heavenly Father, having put on us

the best robe {Luke 15:22},

tells us that the world through which we walk is evil, and lying in the wicked one, and charges us to be watchful, so that our garments may be always white. Ah, my friends, we have great need to watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation. The defiling world is terribly ensnaring, fleshly lusts are very deceitful, and Satan is a mighty deceiver; so that we need to watch. Jesus always kept unspotted garments. He resisted every temptation, and

quenched every fiery dart of Satan. He never sat in the scorner's chair; He always rejected the counsel of the ungodly. No one on earth ever so loved sinners, and yet He was

separate from sinners {Heb. 7:26}.

The world could never force an entrance into His heart, so that He could truly say,

I am not of the world {John 17:14, 16}.

From first to last, at all times, and under all circumstances, He kept His garments unspotted.

He knew no sin {see 2 Cor. 5:21}.

But we, alas! even the most watchful of us, have to mourn over our defiled garments. It is, indeed, too true. They do get spotted, they are not always white. In unguarded moments we fail, and are defiled. But even here again the grace of God meets us, and our tears of sorrow and regret are wiped away by the uplifted hands of our great High Priest; and our sighs are hushed by the still small voice of our Heavenly Father, assuring us that,

if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness {1 John 1:9}.

He tells us of the perpetual efficacy of the blood, and the all-prevailing character of the priesthood of Christ in maintaining our conscious nearness to God; and while reminding us of His holiness in commanding us to

sin not

His grace assures us that

if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous {1 John 2:1}.

Thus, by the contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ, our communion is restored, our defiled consciences are purged, our garments are cleansed, and we realize again that we have white raiment, though surrounded by an evil-and defiling world.

We are called to walk with God; therefore we should be watchful, lest we slide away and fall from our high places. We should be watchful, lest we forget our standing in Christ, and be found again trying to feed upon carnal husks at the swine-trough. We should be watchful, lest our eye rest upon the world's vain glitter, and our hearts become attracted to it. We should be watchful, lest we yield to evil suggestions, and give utterance to unholy words. We should be watchful, lest we lay down the shield of faith, and slumber in the arms of unbelief. We should be watchful, lest we lose our relish for the sincere milk of the word. We should watch against everything that hinders our rejoicing in the Lord. In a word, we should seek to keep our garments unspotted: but when defilement is contracted, we should at once, with confession, bring it to God our Father, and believe that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:9). May we be diligent; so that when Jesus comes we may be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless!

3. THE BELIEVER SHOULD SAVOUR OF CHRIST.

Let thy head lack no ointment {Eccl. 9:8}.

Some people of the world do not consider themselves full dressed, unless they have perfumed themselves with some pleasant odour, and wherever they go they leave traces of the sweet scent. So the true Christian is not only made the righteousness of God in Christ; but he is anointed with the Holy Ghost --

Ye have an unction from the Holy One {1 John 2:20}.

Hence he is called to witness for Christ, to show forth the virtues of Christ, to confess Christ. As he yields to fleshly lusts, so the Spirit which dwelleth in him is grieved or quenched, and then there will be little of Christ. It is because of this that many talk so much about Christianity with scarcely any reference to Christ; that some preach a long discourse, and if Christ be named at all, He is only briefly referred to at the close; and others write upon religious subjects with Christless pages. If such are really God's people, it is because their heads lack ointment; they are living in fleshly energy instead of in dependence on God the Holy Ghost. The apostle Paul bids us beware of every thing which is not after Christ (Col. 2:8); and our Lord said,

Whosoever shall CONFESS ME before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. But he that DENIETH ME before men shall be denied before the angels of God {Luke 12:8, 9}.

Nothing can more plainly show us, that it is not religious things or opinions to which we are called upon to give testimony, but to Christ -- Christ in the infinite perfections of His person, work, worth, and coming. Paul and others, through grace, kept so close to Christ, that the savour of His knowledge was made manifest by them in every place. He tells us that he lived by the faith of Christ, preached Christ, and so manifested Christ, as to be able to say,

For to me to live is Christ {Phil. 1:21};

and looked for Christ's coming again. If he wrote a letter, it was full of Christ; his inspired epistles show this. The apostle John also tells us that he was banished to the isle of Patmos for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. So we, being united to Christ, and indwelt by the Spirit of Christ, are exhorted to be rooted and built up in Christ, to rejoice in Christ, to have our conversation as becometh the gospel of Christ, and to wait for His coming. For these things, we need frequent spiritual renewings, constant supplies of grace, yea, to be filled with the Spirit; thus our head will lack no ointment.

I have said more to the believer than I intended; but the deep importance of these points would not allow me hastily to pass them by. In conclusion, let me earnestly say to the reader, Have you peace? If so, I am sure it is through the blood of Christ. There is no other way. Oh, unconverted friends! beware of any false ground. You cannot honor Christ unless you accept Him as your Savior, and

he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him {John 5:23}.

Beware of being religious without a present and everlasting salvation by Christ. On your receiving or rejecting Christ who was crucified for sinners your eternal destiny depends. He that believeth not shall be damned. But perhaps, my reader, you feel yourself a heavy-laden sinner; you acknowledge your

transgressions, and are ready to despair and give yourself up for lost. The utterances of your anxious heart are --

“Depth of mercy! can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear?
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?
I have long withstood His grace,
Long provoked Him to His face;
Would not hearken to His calls,
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.”

My friend, you need not despair. Christ died for the ungodly. He delighteth in mercy. His blood cleanseth from all sin. It rejoices His heart to save; and He still calls with outstretched arms to you, saying,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest {Matt. 11:28}.

Only believe.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved {Acts 16:31}.

Happy those who can say --

“I hear the words of love,
I gaze upon the blood,
I see the mighty sacrifice,
And I have peace with God.

“’Tis everlasting peace!
Sure as Jehovah’s name;
’Tis stable as His steadfast throne,
For evermore the same.

“My love is oftentimes low,
My joy still ebbs and flows;
But peace with Him remains the same,
No change Jehovah knows.

“I change, He changes not;
My Christ can never die;
His love, not mine, the resting-place,
His truth, not mine, the tie.

“The Cross still stands unchanged,
Though heaven is now His home;
The mighty stone is rolled away,
But yonder is His tomb!

“And yonder is my peace,
The grave of all my woes!
I know the Son of God has come,
I know He died and rose.”

Addendum:

Occupied With the Lord Himself

John 20:19-23

Allusion has been made to the great importance of our having clear knowledge of what the Lord's mind is concerning us in these closing days; and I have read this Scripture, in connection with the latter part of the epistle to the assembly in Laodicea, which has already been brought before us, to call attention to the fact that during the whole period of the Lord's absence, His own ministry is characterized by the presentation of Himself. We see here that Christ began His ministry to His disciples after His resurrection by presenting Himself, and we know also that he opened to them the Scriptures concerning Himself; and in His last address, which was to the Laodiceans, He knocks and calls to any faithful one to open the door to Himself, for He wants to feast with any who will open the door to Him. During the whole of the time of His absence we know that the Holy Ghost is here to testify of Christ to our souls, to take of His things and show unto us. So one thing is perfectly certain that it is the Lord's mind that our hearts should be occupied with Himself.

A precious thought here for our souls is that the Lord looks after us, cares for us, and seeks to make us happy in Himself. It is not our looking up to Him, important and blessed as it is, but He opens His heart to us, and would have us know what His thoughts about us are, and that we are constant objects of His active ministry while He is in heaven and we are still in the world. We must not forget that there is such a thing as being interested in truth without being taken up with Christ, who is the truth; but it is assuredly His will that we should "*grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*"

Through these precious Scriptures we are able to look a little into our Lord's heart. It was only a short time before this precious scene we have just read that he had died upon the cross. Men hated Him without a cause. They perseveringly cried out "Away with Him," "Crucify Him," so that when He was taken down from the cross, and laid in a sepulcher, the world seemed to have got rid of Him, and all appeared to be over. Not so, however, for He rose from among the dead. He came out of the sepulcher in the power of resurrection. He was on new ground, outside the world, the other side of death. Now, what does Christ do? Whose company does He seek? Who on earth are the objects of His solicitude? Who? His heart turns to the few poor disciples He had left behind. He seeks not the rich, the noble, nor the mighty; but he seeks out the timid, faltering disciples. They were the objects of His affection and care. He found them sad and terrified, or shut into a room for fear of the Jews, yet He did not leave them until they were full of joy and gladness; and the way He effected it was by revealing Himself, and expounding unto them the Scriptures concerning Himself.

The blessed Lord having found His distressed disciples, first of all establishes them on the true ground of peace -- His own accomplished work on the cross -- He said,

peace be unto you; and when He had so said He shewed unto them His hands and His side.

We have here the assurance of peace based upon His own *work* on the cross, as His hands and side show, and brought to us by His own infallible *word*, "Peace be unto you." Having Himself made peace, He does not tell them to look at themselves, their feelings, or doings, but at Himself -- "His hands and His side" -- and to rest on His word, "Peace be unto you."

Thus they were drawn away from themselves, their fears, and their circumstances, to Himself -- the One who had loved them and given Himself for them. And while they were thus contemplating Him, and all the wondrous love He had manifested toward them in having suffered for their sins, the Just for the unjust, while they gazed upon Him as the mighty Conqueror of death and Satan, in rising from among the dead, while they were thus engaged with Him what was the result? We are told,

Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

They were made very happy in Him. Thus, while we see that the *work* of Christ is the ground of peace, We also learn that the *person* of Christ is the true source of joy.

Then were the disciples *glad* when they *saw the Lord*.

This is a precious secret for our hearts. Some of the Lord's people imagine that they cannot be "glad" as long as they are in circumstances of sorrow, but this is not true. The Lord did not alter the circumstances of those disciples who were "shut in for fear of the Jews;" but He showed them Himself, and this raised them above their circumstances, so that they were "*glad* when they *saw the Lord*." Again, in the first chapter of Peter's first epistle, you see saints in great trial, and through persecution scattered abroad, homeless, and it may be houseless, friendless, and in other sorrowful experiences, but looking to Him whom having not seen they loved, they "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory," without any part of their sorrowful circumstances having been altered.

Well, indeed, it is to be so taken up with the Lord Himself as shall enable us to "Rejoice in the Lord always!"

Then, observe, when these disciples were thus established by our blessed Lord on the true ground of peace, and made happy in Himself' He then sends them out into service

As the Father, has sent me, ve en so send I you.

Thus we see that every believer has a mission. The Lord keeps us here for His service. He gives us each our work If any believer

wants to know what his line of service is, he can only have it from the Lord Himself. Thus happy in the Lord, he goes forth as sent by the Lord. In this way, true service connects us with the Lord Himself, and we prove that His yoke is easy and His burden light.

Then we are told that Christ

breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

The Lord being now alive again from the dead, in resurrection life and power, communicated to His disciples what could not have been given before, risen life -- life in the Spirit, -- by breathing on {into} them. I need not say this is not the coming of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, because after this they were told by our Lord, in the first of Acts, that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

There is another point of great interest in this Scripture, it is Christ assuring His disciples (not apostles) that He will be so with us here, that,

Whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained.

The Lord. said something like it in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. Speaking of church discipline, He said,

If he neglect to hear the assembly, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven . . . For whosoever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:18, 20}

Now what seems so sweet in these statements is that the blessed Lord so identifies Himself with us in our service to His name, that He will confirm and put His seal on acts of discipline; and in this way so binding or loosing, remitting or retaining sins, as to ratify in heaven what we, as gathered in {gathered together unto} His name and by the power of His Spirit, may do on earth for His name's sake. It is very solemn, but it surely brings the Lord in His great love very near to us, and in matters often very sorrowful to our hearts. I need not say there is no idea here of priestly absolution, nor of any absolution as to justification and eternal life.

The more we know of the Lord Himself, and His love and care for His own, the more will He become the satisfying object of our hearts. And this true enjoyment of Christ, who is the holy and the true, can alone keep us, I believe, from drifting into Laodicea. We are enjoined elsewhere to look away from other objects unto Jesus, to consider Him, to abide in Him, for surely Christ Himself is the true object of faith. To the most failing He knocks, and faith opens the door to Him; and observe, Christ takes the initiative, and desires our fellowship. He says,

I will come into him and sup with him, and he with Me.

Blessed be His name, this is His desire toward us even in the worst state of things ecclesiastically. What love, yea, what patient, matchless grace !

Is it not clear, then, beloved brethren, that it is our Lord's mind that however failing be the state of things spiritually round about us, that we should be *individually* taken up with the Lord

Himself, and be learning increasingly of Him? And is it not also clear, that, however important other matters may appear to be, we cannot be according to His mind if we not living by faith upon the Lord, and drawing our help and blessing from Him? We may be assured that nothing will make up for lack of personal intercourse with Christ. May our hearts, then, be more and more entering into His perfections and love which not only save us from ten thousand snares, but keep us happy under the most trying circumstances, and make the Lord's coming our bright and blessed hope!

The Bible Herald, 1877, pp. 101-106.

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